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THE ALLIANCE – WHAT FUTURE?

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Finding our feet, without losing our heads

THE present situation poses two basic challenges to our broad national liberation movement. We have to find our feet in a fast changing, slippery present, without losing our longer term perspectives.

If we spend too much time admiring our own footwork, we risk forgetting where we have been trying to go for the past decades. If we simply stare at future goals, we are going to lose our balance right here in the present.

These twin challenges demand creativity from us in regard to a wide range of issues – not least in the development of the programme of our broad national liberation movement, and in the organisational character of our movement. We cannot simply stand still, but we cannot just invent for its own sake. We need to debate, discuss and analyse.

The majority of the articles in this issue of *The African Communist* are contributions to these critical debates. Jabu Moleketi and the Tripartite Alliance discussion document on strategic perspectives both address the programmatic questions and their relationship to the organisational character of our movement. Langa Zita's contribution has a similar concern, how do we engage effectively with the present situation **as socialists**? How are working class interests to be advanced in the complicated transition? Will workers be sold out?

This last question is not a concern that should simply be brushed aside. It was precisely this legitimate concern that led to a recent NUMSA congress resolution alluding to the possibility of an independent (independent of the ANC, that is) workers' party. Without dismissing the underlying concern, Amos Masondo takes issue with the proposed organisational remedy.

The tripartite (ANC/SACP/COSATU) alliance is not the result of

organisational manoeuvres. It is rooted in the social and economic realities of South Africa as Cyril Ramaphosa underlines. Ours is a society in which national oppression of the majority occurs, uniquely for Africa, in a country in which the working class is not just strategically placed, but numerically dominant. No meaningful national liberation process is possible without workers playing a leading role in every respect. No effective liberation is possible, unless working class interests are central.

On the other hand, no liberation is going to occur without mobilising the broadest range of nationally oppressed. The leading role of the working class is not to be won on the margins, or only amongst itself. That leading role has to be carved out within the majority political project itself. And, in South African conditions, that majority political project, as everyone knows and as the NUMSA conference more than once acknowledged, lies within the ANC. It lies within the ANC-led alliance – the tripartite, and the much wider ANC-aligned mass democratic movement.

No-one on the left, as far as we know, is denying the need for autonomous, independent working class organisations. The SACP has been in an alliance with the ANC for over 60 years. Throughout this period, our party has never ceased being an independent formation in its own right.

But the ongoing organisational character of the ANC-led alliance is, certainly, not something simply to be taken for granted. The alliance should not be promoted merely for old time's sake. The alliance is grounded in the social and economic realities of our country. Whatever conference decisions are taken, something resembling this alliance between a national liberation movement, a working class party, trade unions and other mass democratic formations will exist in South Africa. It is an objective necessity. It is, however, obviously best if the shape and character of that alliance is also the result of conscious decisions.

For that, the exact character of this alliance needs to be constantly assessed and debated. It is to this discussion that this issue of *The African Communist* is largely devoted.

Strategic objectives of the National Liberation Struggle

This discussion paper arises from the Alliance Strategy Meeting of 26/7 May 1993. The meeting was not a decision-making forum but rather an extended "lekgotla". This paper summarises the main conclusions of an extensive discussion on our broad strategic perspectives. It does not, however, represent the final position of any section of the alliance.

1. Introduction

Around the time of February 2 1990, two things happened more or less simultaneously. Both called for a rethink of our strategic and tactical approaches.

On the one hand there was the collapse in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Not only the SACP, but all sections of our liberation movement had been profoundly influenced in various ways by the existence of the Soviet bloc.

On the other hand, February 2 presented us with a new national terrain for which we had to either develop new strategies, or at least considerably alter existing strategies and tactics. Failure to make such an adaptation would have disarmed us. We had to read the situation accurately and develop the correct approach in order to realise our goals.

Our attempts to adjust tactically and strategically to the new situation have often been innovative. Our adjustments have enabled us, in very difficult circumstances, to maintain, seize or regain the strategic initiative on many fronts.

But these tactical and strategic adjustments have been uneven and, at times, confusing.

Among our broad membership and

constituency, these adjustments have often been perceived as a 'sell out', a 'right wing shift' and 'abandonment' of our basic aims. Many of these perceptions relate to the rapidity with which political relationships between the forces of liberation and the regime (and other conservative forces) have moved from confrontation to a mixture of confrontation and engagement. Some have read these changes in our interactions with the regime as also substantially modifying our goals.

But *are* the necessary adjustments (and some of them are major adjustments) in contradiction, in principle, with our basic National Democratic Revolution goals?

2. What is our basic NDR position?

The clear position of the National Liberation Movement, prior to February 1990, was that we were engaged in a National Democratic Revolution (NDR), the object of which was the emancipation of the black people in general and the African people in particular. This revolution would inaugurate a system of people's power. The revolution would be under the overall leadership of the working class. It would entail national liberation from Colonialism of a Special Type. It would involve fundamental political, social and economic change, transferring power in all sectors into the hands of the people.

The Freedom Charter's broad demands best summarised the overall goals. These goals have generally been encompassed within the phrase 'transfer of power to the people'.

We need now not to abandon, but to elaborate much more thoroughly what we understand by the concept 'transfer of power to the people'. The need to elaborate this more fully is based, not so much on a difficult internal and external balance of forces, but because some of our earlier assumptions about transferring power to the people were limited.

In particular, despite the Freedom Charter's broad social and economic perspectives, we tended to have a statist (that is, state-centred) approach to the NDR. The NDR would come about when an ANC-led National Liberation Movement (NLM) smashed the apartheid regime, assumed state power (which we tended to equate with the 'transfer of power to the people') and then implemented its programme.

In the present situation, however, a state-centred approach to the NDR has emerged in a new variant. This new variant (new at least within our own struggle) is an electoralist and/or constitutionalist variant.

3. A new kind of statism: the NDR as an election or a new constitution

An electoralist or constitutionalist version of NDR sees the revolution as more or less completed with the winning of a non-racial election. In other words, this approach sees the realisation of the NDR occurring at some particular (and fairly close) moment in time. One recent ANC regional conference, for instance, convened under the banner: 'Elections – the last step to freedom'.

There are variations on the theme – depending on when the decisive event is deemed to occur. In some variations, as in the ANC regional conference, the decisive moment is seen as the elections next year. In others it is the installation of a new democratic constitution, or subsequent elections in terms of this new constitution when "true majority rule" will finally have arrived. The main thing is that some key historical moment of rupture in the political system is identified as the culmination of the NDR.

We must certainly not underestimate the significance of our first ever one-person one-vote elections, or of a constitution made as a result of a democratic process. Every previous South African constitution has been thrust down the throats of the people.

But nor must we collapse the NDR more or less simplistically into these forthcoming events. The unstated assumption is that it is of no great consequence if all organisation (whether the ANC itself, or its allies) is collapsed into government. It is the government that will deliver unilaterally. The government embodies people's power.

From this perspective, there may still be a commitment to reconstruction. But reconstruction is seen largely as state welfarism – the people become consumers of a reconstruction dispensed from above.

Is there an alternative?

4. An alternative approach: national democratic revolution is a process of popular self-empowerment

Whether in the seizure of state power pre-1990 versions, or in the electoralist/constitutionalist versions of the present, the state-centred approaches share common limitations. Absent in them all is any conception of NDR as, essentially, a mass movement and a mass struggle for development and reconstruction.

It is absolutely essential that this kind of emphasis on popular self-empowerment is now elaborated. We say this not because of any populist mystique about the masses. The simple fact is that, without mass involvement and mass organisation, a future democratically-elected state

will be relatively weak and isolated in the present global and national balance of forces. Without a mass movement for national democratic transformation, there will be very little effective reconstruction.

The constraints that will impose themselves in the coming five years on government are under-lined by the national unity, power-sharing package into which we shall be entering. This package is a symptom (not the cause) of the global and local constraints within which we are operating.

We believe, therefore, that we must move away from state-centred conceptions of the NDR, both in principle and for sound practical reasons. An alternative approach carries with it a number implications for our understanding of democracy, and for the organ-isational tasks confronting us.

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4.1 Deepening our conception of democracy

Thorough-going democratisation of all spheres of our society lies at the heart of the NDR project. To shift away from a narrow statism, means that we need to deepen and widen our conception of what this democracy is.

Democracy is clearly, in the first place, the winning of a non-racial electoral system. This is **representative** democracy, and it will mark a major historical victory for us. But democracy extends well beyond the immensely important periodic right to one-person one-vote elections at national, regional and local level.

To approach the NDR as an ongoing process of popular self-empowerment, highlights the importance of both **participatory** and **direct** democracy.

Participatory democracy needs to be fostered in the development and extension of numerous sectoral forums, at national, regional and local level. These participatory forums are beginning to develop in embryo – in the National Economic Forum, in the National Education, Health and Housing Forums, in a number of Regional Development Forums, etc. Participatory democracy also finds expression in SRCs, PTAs, and in shopsteward structures that increase worker power over managerial decisions. The deepening of the

democratisation process will need to involve increasing empowerment of these participatory institutions, without undermining organs of representative democracy.

As in the past, the ongoing development of national democratic transition will also require **direct democratic action** of the people in support of their demands – for instance, to ensure the achievement of a basic human right, or in support of a reconstruction demand that might be goverment policy, but which is being resisted by one or another formation.

This latter example underlines a critical point about the NDR. Our attempts to deepen democracy in our country may not, unfortunately, follow a smooth path. We are not the sole actors on the terrain. We must certainly work to ensure that potential antagonists are won over to the process.

But we cannot assume that this will happen. Our struggle for reconstruction may encounter serious destabilisation, even a concerted counter-revolutionary challenge. In such a situation, our alliance will certainly not condemn direct democratic action by the popular masses.

In the face of, let us say, a food production boycott by reactionary farmers, land occupations, with or without prior governmental sanction, will be more than legitimate. Those who are tempted to undermine democratisation need to understand this very clearly.

A reconstruction programme will best achieve its objectives in a climate of peace and stability. We shall work hard to ensure these. Major destabilisation will not be of our choosing. But if we have to pursue reconstruction in the teeth of serious anti-democratic projects, we shall do so, and we shall call, amongst other things, for direct mass action in support of our efforts.

4.2 Organisational implications

4.2.1 The ANC

In the first place, a non-statist view of NDR, a view of NDR that underlines it as a mass-driven process, highlights the ongoing tasks we have in terms of building and consolidating the **ANC**.

As the ANC, and jointly from within the Tripartite Alliance, we need to build an ANC that remains essentially a broad national liberation movement. It must remain an ANC that is anchored among the oppressed majority. It must be an ANC that is able to lead people in struggle for development and against the thousands of injustices and oppressions they encounter in their daily lives.

This approach must, in no way, detract from the important tasks of winning elections on the ANC ticket, and of governing. We believe that the ANC will discharge both tasks most effectively, in the concrete conditions of our country, precisely if it remains essentially a national liberation movement.

We need to admit openly that, regardless of our intentions or traditions, the break-up of our Alliance would carry serious risks for each of the three components.

4.2.2. The alliance

In the second place, the view of NDR as a mass driven process of relatively long duration (and not as some political event just around the corner) underlines the need for an enduring Tripartite Alliance. This alliance is grounded in a shared strategic perspective – precisely our common commitment to a far-reaching process of national democratic transformation.

In other words, the alliance is not based on some vague "trust" which may or may not be "betrayed" by a future government. (This, incidentally, is another version of statism, a sceptical version). Nor is it an alliance "for old time's sake". Our alliance is not primarily based on nostalgia, on the fact that we have all been "in the same trench together against apartheid".

Our alliance is also not a temporary pact. The reconstruction programme, which we need to elaborate, will enable us to concretise our Charterist perspectives in the context of the 1990s going into the 21st century. The reconstruction programme, which lies at the heart of our NDR, is much more than a temporary electoral platform.

The tripartite is an alliance between autonomous partners but in which there is an enormous interdependence and overlapping of membership. This interdependence is rooted in the character of our struggle, and of our society. Our's is a national liberation struggle against a special form of colonialism, on the terrain of a relatively developed capitalist society. It is a national liberation struggle where, uniquely, the working class is both the leading **and** the main class force.

We need to admit openly that, regardless of our intentions or traditions, the break-up of our Alliance would carry serious risks for each of the three components.

An ANC cut loose from independent working class formations, would find itself more easily dislodged from

its historical and strategic vocation. Regardless of good intentions and an heroic track-record, it would become ever more susceptible to the pressures of governmental office, and to influence of non-popular strata, inside its ranks and beyond. An ANC without the alliance would be an ANC in which the confusion and sense of betrayal amongst its own grass-roots mem-bership would be increased.

A trade union movement that withdraws from the national liberation movement runs the danger of declining into a narrow, economistic unionism. An SACP that "goes it alone", risks becoming a defensive, grievance party, cut adrift from the main-stream of positive transformation.

In alliance, each of our formations has a powerful contribution to make, and each is able to carve out a more effective role for itself. As an alliance, we are more than the sum of our parts. Alone, each of us is diminished.

It is no accident that our antagonists spend a great deal of energy attempting to undermine our unity.

4.2.3 The mass democratic movement

This strategic orientation (the NDR as a process) also underlines the need for a broad mass democratic movement that extends well beyond the ANC and the tripartite alliance. We envisage a

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broad mass movement for development and reconstruction.

While the ANC and the alliance need to provide leadership and coherence to this broad movement, it is essential that the independent capacity and input of numerous sectoral formations is not undermined. In other words, this broad mass democratic movement will need to be based on the acceptance of pluralistic principles.

5. Conclusion

We believe that the broad strategic perspectives, outlined in this discussion paper, help to meet the dual challenge that confronts us:

◉ We need to engage effectively on the terrain on which we find ourselves; but in doing this we must not lose sight of

◉ The strategic objectives of our struggle.

A one-sided concentration on the former, can lead to tactical confusion and an ultimate loss of organisational cohesion and mass support. A one-sided concentration on the latter, can lead to sterile dogmatism, to an inability to engage effectively with the present.

This paper is, as was stated at the beginning, the product of extensive discussion by leadership delegations of the Tripartite Alliance. It is published because, unlike our opponents, we believe that these kinds of discussions need to become the property of our members, our supporters and of all those concerned to see a democratic South Africa.☭

Is a retreat from National Democratic Revolution to National Bourgeois Revolution imminent?

The need for both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of struggle during the period of IGNU and GNUR.

by Jabu Moleketi

OVER the years the ANC, the SACP and all other allied forces have held firm the national democratic banner with its strategic slogan "Amandla ngawethu" – "Power to the people". This slogan captures the essence of the Freedom Charter in a very dynamic and popular way. The Freedom Charter advances a form of democracy wherein governance is inextricably linked to an uninterrupted programme of mass empowerment, social, economic, cultural and political empowerment. It is this vision of a new South Africa that goes beyond just a mere extension of "bourgeois-democratic rights" to all South Africans, irrespective of race, colour or class origin, that has rallied millions of our people behind the ANC-led alliance. Given the current political conjuncture, in which you can lose on the table that which you have won on the ground, and vice-versa, the crucial question is "how do we drive this process forward in a manner that will ensure that the socio-economic content of our national democratic revolution (NDR) is not lost or undermined?"

In the history of national liberation movements in the third world there have been many unhappy endings. Many national liberation movements set out with the noblest of intentions but, due to a variety of factors, they

failed to sustain the momentum of the NDR. Obviously good intentions on their own are inadequate. Even the magnificent contributions of selfless altruists come to nought if not backed and informed by a myriad of people's organisations mobilised around issues of common concern. The South African ruling class is currently waging a fierce struggle, both inside and outside the negotiations venue at the World Trade Centre to ensure that, when everything is said and done, the existing economic power relations are not threatened.

The coming period will be marked by the intensification of efforts by the ruling class and certain petty bourgeois elements to reduce the national democratic revolution to mere ascendancy to political office of people's representatives. Most of the socio-economic objectives of the national democratic revolution will be deemed unattainable by these forces and their allies internationally, given the framework of a "viable market driven economy".

The coming period will be marked by the intensification of efforts by the ruling class and certain petty bourgeois elements to reduce the national democratic revolution to mere ascendancy to political office of people's representatives.

The ruling class is poised to engage the forces of national liberation in a series of battles, particularly in the economic sphere, to reduce the impact of political changes on this area. This they aim to achieve through a vast variety of complex measures undertaken and implemented by a host of forces located in different camps – the rightwing, liberal capitalist and the petty bourgeoisie under a national democratic cloak. Their objective, among others, is to ensure that an election of a majority rule government is not perceived as a milestone but rather as the final and ultimate goal of the NDR. In short, the proprietor class is trying to execute its historically acclaimed *coup de grace* of reducing the objectives of popular struggles into nothing more than the attainment of representative democracy, thus reducing the autonomy and sovereignty of the people. The extent and level of our preparedness to consistently wage a national democratic struggle will determine whether South Africa joins the league of the Kenyas or not.

The outcome of struggles for democratic space within which forms of direct democracy can and must develop, can lead to the broadening and deepening of democracy. This is a phenomenon that is bound to be resisted by the capitalist class and forces that are advancing a "neo-colonialism of a special type" project in South Africa. Taking over state control is one of the key tasks in the NDR, but the democratisation process must not be state or parliament centred.

A trend that has characterised the forces of national liberation globally is the blurring or distortion of the relationship and differences between the state, political party, elected representatives and organs of civil society when the national liberation forces take political power. This must under no circumstances be allowed to take root in our country.

History has proved that this trend plays directly into the hands of capital. Instead of stretching capital to its limits, it creates a situation where a democratic state becomes the only opponent and, in a majority of instances, capital has emerged victorious under such circumstances. Our approach should be one that seeks to engage capital in a whole range of class battles. This can be achieved through building and strengthening mass democratic formations and organs of civil society.

Is the National Democratic Revolution at stake?

The Freedom Charter encapsulates the goals and objectives of the NDR. Over the years, depending on the concrete conditions prevailing in our country, different forms of struggle were undertaken in pursuance of these objectives. In the not so distant future we will be entering the most complex phase in the NDR. A phase which was characterised by Lenin as a make or break phase. That is when the forces of national liberation and democracy take over state control.

It is an era seen by many an activist/revolutionary as an era of popular rule (the people shall govern). It is a period in which a reconstruction plan will be put in place to redress the ills of colonialism of a special type. It is a time in which consistent struggles are waged to neutralise all backward political and social formations.

But questions such as the following beg honest answers: Is the leap between a democratic constitution and effective popular rule possible? Is the implementation of a thorough-going reconstruction plan that will ensure socio-economic upliftment of the oppressed majority possible ? If the answer to both these questions is negative we might as well kiss the NDR goodbye and hope that we see it

later. And if the answer is affirmative then we must without any waste of time ask how these objectives can be achieved, given our situation. Clearly, given the limitations imposed by transitional arrangements (five years of power-sharing in a Government of National Unity) and the legacy of apartheid state machinery and its economy, mean that a new democratic government can never bring about substantial change on its own.

The power of the masses expressed through struggles and dynamic organisational forms is indispensable to ensuring thorough-going democratic and socio-economic change. If we cannot, at this point understand fire (extra-parliamentary struggles) and water (parliamentary struggles) except as opposites, then the NDR is definitely threatened.

A tug of war in the coming period between national liberation forces engaged in the struggle to implement the programme of reconstruction and the efforts of the proprietor class to submerge class contradictions and struggle in the name of "national economic interests" is unavoidable.

Parliamentary Struggles

The deep-seated crisis of apartheid capitalism engaged, particularly in the late 1980s, a whole range of social and political formations with varying class backgrounds, and interests in a search for a national political consensus with a variable democratic content. The strategic objectives of these formations is to influence (directly or indirectly) the future path of the new democratic government in their favour. A tug of war in the coming period between national liberation forces engaged in the struggle to implement the programme of reconstruction and the efforts of the proprietor class to submerge class contradictions and struggle in the name of "national economic interests" is unavoidable.

We know that society can never be changed by parliament only, and that parliamentary struggles are not primary in the struggle against capital. Yet what is it that makes the new democratically elected parliament/ national assembly all the more important? We must give our people a clear and unambiguous answer as to the role of parliament and the changes that an ANC-led government can effect in the immediate term. We must be unequivocal on how governmental

power can be used in the interest of the oppressed and exploited.

A democratically elected parliament would mark a strategic political change in the history of South Africa. For the first time political power within parliament will be exercised by those who were previously excluded. Almost overnight parliament will be transformed from an institution of minority rule to that of majority rule. The government led by a worker biased ANC would definitely increase the capacity and the speed with which socio-economic reform programmes are undertaken. This will also mark an end of capital's hegemonic grip over parliament.

Extra-parliamentary struggles

The socio-economic conditions that gave rise to the NDR still exist and the role of extra-parliamentary struggle to curtail the perpetuation of apartheid power relations in the next five years cannot be over-emphasised. The power of the ANC led front would, to a great extent, be located outside of state structures. Hence the necessity to mobilise and organise the masses and keep them in constant political motion, now and in the future. Our greatest challenge in the coming period is to ensure that forces that were born out of struggle and built through great sacrifice are not neutralised and ultimately destroyed.

Through mobilisation, organisation and struggle our people have in the past determined the course of events. This will continue.

The Reconstruction Accord – an organising tool

Used correctly, the reconstruction accord has the capacity to build and consolidate forces that will wage a consistent struggle until all objectives of NDR are realised. The accord must not be used to popularise our elections platform only. It is important that it also be used to build and strengthen sectoral organisations. Like the Freedom Charter, each and every clause in the accord must find organisational expression. In short, the accord must become a weapon in the hands of the working class with the aid of which consistent class battles are waged.

Through the accord we must also endeavour to rally and consolidate all social forces that are interested in real democratic change. Slogans such as "free and compulsory primary education for all", "fight poverty, disease and squalor, decent housing and jobs for all", "towards a national health system", have the capacity to build a mass movement outside parliament. It is the growth of this mass democratic movement which will further tilt the strategic balance of forces in our favour.

Elections and organs of civil society

The ANC-led alliance remains committed to ensuring the success of the NDR, whose main objective is the transfer of all power to the people, not to a state. Clearly the transfer of power to the people will not be a single event, but rather a process whose first major step is a decisive election victory of the ANC-led forces. As indicated earlier, the reconstruction accord links the electoral process and the ongoing revolutionary task of building and strengthening autonomous and dynamic organs of civil society. It is an approach that seeks to build organs of civil society not only for short term electoral gains (for this amounts to political opportunism) but also for medium and long term objectives which can ensure that the new South Africa is not just a neo-colonial change of faces in the corridors of state power.

It is natural for some of our comrades who are active in the civics and other formations to have a cautious approach on the involvement of organs of civil society in the electoral process. But this cautious approach is not an outcome of a thorough analysis of our situation and the assessment of the challenges facing organs of civil society in the current situation. It is, rather, a fear of some hitherto unknown problems that may occur in the event that a decision is taken. Slumbering in the discomfort of neutrality becomes the only option. This "uncomfortable neutrality" is an extension of a "watch dog" concept, which advocates sitting as close to the fence as possible, and looking for possible transgressors. The organs of civil society are a product of the national democratic struggle. In the course of their struggle they have argued against any form of fence sitting in the fight against apartheid. Whether it will be possible to advocate for organisational neutrality at this point remains to be seen.

The challenge facing all sectoral organisations is the conceptualisation of the relationship between autonomous organisations and the first democratic government.

The challenge facing all sectoral organisations is the conceptualisation of the relationship between autonomous organisations and the first democratic government. The accord creates a basis for this relationship, participation and non-participation must be an outcome of agreement or disagreement with the accord. It will

also be a contradiction in terms for sectoral organisations to support the accord and at the same time choose not to support the ANC-led forces who are the custodians of the accord in the coming elections. It is, therefore, important to expose the artificial contradiction between autonomous organisational form and the support for an ANC-led electoral front. We must expose the damage this state of affairs might cause to the civics in particular and the national democratic struggle in general.

Deepening democracy and struggle against anti-democratic trends

The capacity and speed with which we move from a democratic constitution to effective popular rule depends on the active participation of the masses in the democratisation process. It is this process that must fundamentally change the lives of ordinary people in terms of access to political institutions, freedom from socio-economic hardships, that empowers people to have control over their own lives and over the structures of society. Active, dynamic and autonomous organs of civil society and the democratic state are co-drivers of this process.

It is within this process that effective struggles against backward social and political formations are waged. This process will also open up an arena within which battles against undemocratic practices and corruption will be launched.

It is only through these struggles that a new form of national identity and pride will emerge. It is only through united action that the vision "..all people shall be equal irrespective of race, colour, or creed.." will be realised.

The dangers that are inherent in the coming period

The immediate danger facing the ANC-led alliance is the selection of candidates, be they for constituent assembly or regional and local governments or civil service, without taking into account the overall demands of the national democratic struggle. The danger of the complete absorption of key activists into the abovementioned institutions and services is real. Were this to happen it would result in the collapse of MDM formations.This must not be allowed. Political decisions must be taken on who stands for what...and who doesn't. Our people need a decisive political leadership on this matter and indecisiveness can lead to serious political set-backs.

There are other dangers inherent in the coming period: the reformist trap, the ultra-left deviation, and the emergence of "gentlemen and ladies of politics".

◉ The reformist trap sees parlia-

ment as the only terrain of struggle and rejects extra-parliamentary struggle as rocking the boat.

◉ The ultra-left deviation sees extra-parliamentary struggle as the only form of struggle capable of bringing about meaningful change.

Parliament is perceived as a reformist institution whose impotence is unparalleled

◉ The "gentlemen and ladies of politics" danger is the emergence of a bureaucratic elite with vested interests in the perks of parliamentary politics.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that none of these tendencies gain ground.

The relationship between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary

The multi-class nature of the state, notwithstanding the leading role of the worker biased ANC, reduces the capability of the state to act entirely and solely on behalf of the underprivileged masses. On many an occasion concessions will have to be made with other forces representing other class interests. It is therefore apparent that the relationship between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary will, at times, be characterised by contradictions. To expect an uncontradictory and harmonious relationship is unrealistic, more especially if one takes the implications of the Government of National Unity into consideration. The ANC-led democratic government will be sailing the rough high seas characterised by troughs of the state's limitations and the crests of people's expectations. In our endeavour to deploy both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of struggle, it is crucial to strike a balance, and this must be determined by the concrete conditions and where the greatest chance of victory lies on any given issue. The most important thing is to ensure that during those stormy moments we don't lose direction.

In the coming period we must avoid the danger and temptation both of using extra-parliamentary forms for narrow propaganda purposes, and an eventuality where the democratic state

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Organisational implications

Our organisational capacity to conduct struggle on these two fronts (parliamentary and extra-parliamentary) will determine whether the ANC in particular and the tri-partite in general, continues to exercise leadership in the NDR. Exercising overall leadership is not to be confused with leading each and every battle. On many an occasion battles will be waged and led by organs of civil society, and this must not be perceived as undermining or threatening the leadership role of the ANC, but as a process of empowerment.

Consequently, building organisational capacity must not be understood as building a myriad of structures to exercise bureaucratic control on all aspects of life. Rather, we must ensure that people are empowered to exercise control over their lives. In line with the above, attempts to transform our entire organisations into support arms of parliament and government must also be resisted.

We must find a balance between the necessity of some of our senior and best cadres participating in the Constituent Assembly and state institutions and the need to maintain viable organisational structures (and not just props).

The coming period has new prospects and new opportunities to carry out the political struggle. Our main task, be it in parliament or outside parliament, is to defend and advance the interests of the oppressed and exploited masses. For those in our ranks who will be in parliament, the immediate task will be to turn parliament into a forum for the defence of democracy. At the same time, the attempts by capital to regroup around and popularise liberal bourgeois concepts of freedom and democracy must be met also with organised, dynamic and autonomous organs of civil society. ☭

Moving beyond the Social Contract

by Langa Zita*

LAST year one of the main debates within the South African left centred around the issue of a social contract. The debate tended to be stuck between three positions: those who were advocating a social contract as an end in itself; those who saw in the social contract a stepping stone to socialism; and those who rejected the notion of a contract outright, and called for an immediate socialist revolution instead (without being very clear how this was going to happen).

In the course of 1993 the second position has begun to develop more coherently, moving away from a central focus on the social contract, and highlighting a different issue - a reconstruction programme. In this paper I want to support this shift, in doing this I will also briefly consider the limitations in the original three positions.

Social contract positions

In the words of Enoch Godongwana "a social contract or accord is an agreement by major stake holders in society – notably organised labour, capital and the state – to give content to common objectives of economic growth, employment creation and better standards of living for the whole population"[1].

There have been a number of voices echoing support for a social contract of this kind, ranging from big business to social democrats and socialists. It is not my intention to respond to the representatives of capital, their objectives are quite clear and are basically designed to save capital. It is more with our comrades in the left that I wish to raise some points for debate.

Karl van Holdt[2] of *The SA Labour Bulletin*, John Copelyn[3] of SACTWU, and Geoff Schreiner[4], formerly from NUMSA, have all participated in the

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debate, moving from the assertion that various accords with the state and/ or with capital would have to be entered into. However all of them appear not to have moved to the extreme of seeing the social accord as an end in itself, but rather as laying a foundation for future socialist advance. But as to how this is to come about, not much clarity is offered.

On the other hand, there are a number of avowed social democrats, among them Pieter Le Roux[5] of the University of the Western Cape and Alan Fine[6] of *Business Day*, who favour a social accord in its own right. Le Roux is hostile to the immiseration thesis of orthodox Marxists. He sees it as inapplicable to modern capitalism, particularly because the revolution that was supposed to follow it has not yet materialised. Fine suspects that those who are opposed to a social contract welcome the immiseration of the working class, working class poverty is their only hope for such "antiquated" concepts as class consciousness and class struggle. For Le Roux and Fine social contracts and social democracy are the answer, any other socialist alternative will degenerate into authoritarianism. For Fine the left has no other method of realising socialism other than authoritarianism, whose main expression, in his view, is the indispensable forceful expropriation of the capitalist means of production.

The Socialist Revolution Camp

A strong criticism of the social contract has emerged from Alex Callinicos[7] of the Socialist Workers Party of Britain in his interesting intervention, ***Between Apartheid and Capitalism***. The basic gist of his intervention is that the social contract, that we appear to be embracing in South Africa, has not succeeded anywhere in Europe. Even in Sweden, which is often advanced as a model, the contract is suffering immense problems. Callinicos makes the point that in countries where the social contract existed, the working class kept its side of the deal only to be dumped by the bourgeoisie. He urges South African revolutionaries to take the struggle to its logical conclusion – socialism (but by what means is not very clear).

It is my view that aspects of all these positions have serious omissions, silences and errors that need to be highlighted as part of the process of developing a socialist, working class programme in our country.

A critique of the social contract advocates

It cannot be doubted that workers in social democracies have made enormous gains in social services such

as housing, education and full employment. They have gone a long way in decommodifying a number of areas relating to working class life. The advance of these decommodified use values has begun to impact on the profit logic of capitalist production. The very gains of the working class in these societies has, to some extent, led to the current crisis of the social contract, a crisis evidenced in the recent decline and election losses by social democratic and labour parties in Europe.

...the notion of utilising human agency as against blind market forces represents an historical advance...

The social democratic social contract needs, in part, to be related to the impact of the ideas of Keynes in the late 1930s and 40s. Keynesianism introduced the notion of influencing the market by financial and other means, and this increasingly gained some currency within the citadels of capitalist power. The basis for its popularity was its practical success, with Roosevelt's New Deal, in renewing the US economy and thereby saving capital after the 1929 crash.

However, it is important to note from the outset that Keynesian interventions into the market were also in part due to the struggles of workers on the ground. This was a positive historical development because, similarly to the adoption of the 10 hour bill in 19th century Britain (a victory celebrated by Marx), the notion of utilising human agency as against blind market forces represented an historical advance. The principle of plan and of conscious activity was introduced in relation to and against the blind principle of market forces.

With different historical determinants, a similar process was evolving in Europe, particularly in the Scandinavian countries with Sweden in the lead. This was the development of the welfare state. A number of factors were responsible for the development of what came to be known as the "Swedish miracle". I will merely make a list of the most salient elements that led to its evolution:

1. The Social Democrats (SDs), with a reformist working class programme, assumed power at an early stage and were able, in the context of real crises, to evolve policies that benefitted both capital and labour.

2. Sweden did not participate in the first world war and, therefore, had an economic edge in relation to

the belligerents.

3. After the 1929 capitalist crash, the SDs evolved a New Deal that was qualitatively better than Roosevelt's. The unemployed, for instance, were given wages equal to their employed counterparts.

4. Sweden did not participate in world war two, either, and instead profitted from selling raw materials and ball-bearings to Hitler and, when the course of the war changed, to the USA.

5. There was a close relation between the SDs and trade union leaders, and therfore a convergence on what was possible and what was desirable.

6. Sweden experienced rapid industrialisation and a 4.5% annual growth rate.

These factors, historically and geographically specific, were responsible for giving rise to the "Swedish Miracle". However, some of the specifics of this model have now begun to erode:

1. The strong export economy built up in previous decades has left Sweden susceptible to the vicissitudes of the world economy. This was reflected by the 1978 slump that led to closures and layoffs .

2. With the emergence of transnational trade blocs, former markets are no longer so readily accessible.

3. At the same time, Sweden will now have closer access to its European market, a factor that has already strained relations between Swedish capital, some of whose sectors stand to gain, and the SDs who will lose their traditional control over the working class now that production and the working class is going to be Europeanised. The ruling class appears not to give a damn, as evidenced by its change of heart towards the recently elected conservative forces in Sweden, who, with the support of the ruling class, are bent on reversing the gains of the Swedish welfare state.

4. Internationalisation has also led to a substantial relocation of Swedish capital to other countries and the fusion of Swedish capital with other national capitals. All of this further undermines any commitment Swedish capital might feel to a national social accord.

The recent electoral defeat of the Social Democrats in Sweden might be interpreted as the maturation of social

democracy as a particular form of capitalist accumulation which has now started to fetter this very accumu-lation process. Another possibility is that left forces in Sweden, and in other developed countries, may analyse the crisis of social democracy as the result of the contradiction between a relatively socialised market and persisting capitalist relations of production.

From our own immediate South African point of view, ...a social contract is...a product of unique circumstances, such as as the choice or possibility of not participating in wars while benefitting from them.

From our own immediate South African point of view, the essential lesson to be drawn from this brief sketch is that a social contract is not a product of a new found love between capital and labour. It is a product of unique circumstances, such as as the choice or possibility of not participating in wars while benefitting from them. It is a product of a steady economic growth. It has to be sustained by an economy that is not only competitive but which is one of the leading ones internationally. There has to be an accompanying ideology of industrial peace. There has to be a strong union movement that is willing to discipline the workforce, and employers who are willing to discipline each other.

Whilst conditions from one society to another may differ, a core of these elements must obtain if a social contract is to be maintained for any meaningful length of time.

One does not have to be a seasoned economist to observe that none of the above conditions operate in our country. We have have had an oppressive social and political system for more than 350 years. We have an economy that has been in a downswing for more than 15 years. We have a large manufacturing sector, but our products are not competitive internationally. We have a racially divided working class, whose white component still remains committed to racial economic bargaining. We have a section of the working class that is militant and is steeped in class struggle and the ideas of socialism. A significant section of the working class is not unionised, and 40% is unemployed, with a significant core that is developing an ingrained fascist mentality – all factors that can entice the ruling class out of any agreements.

We have a disastrous education system, whose technical component

has been a preserve of a white minority until recently.

In the light of these realities, where will we get the resources to sustain a Swedish-style social contract? Can a corrupt, semiperipheral capitalist system that has been conniving with racism all these years have the will and commitment to master the required resources? Does this capitalist system have the capacity to help finance the bill to rehabilitate our social fabric and to lay a foundation for a possible welfare system? One can only be sceptical.

Callinicos

Before suggesting an alternative perspective on our situation, it would be instructive to return to Callinicos. In this respect I do not have a blank slate, Godongwana has opened the way. Essentially, Godongwana is critical of Callinicos's abstract and ahistorical rejection of the social contract. Godongwana is right, and this ahistoricism of Callinicos reflects a general weakness of seeing transformation only as a result of insurrection, shutting out any other historical possibilities. For Callinicos there can only be one route to transformation – the 1917 route. Godongwana asks a very pertinent question of Callinicos: "What do we tell the 9000 workers in the tyre manufacturing industry when tariffs are removed and their jobs are at stake? Do we tell them to wait for a socialist revolution?"

Godongwana agrees with his colleague Geoff Schreiner that "under certain circumstances, taking into account the balance of forces, such accords, contracts, pacts, agreements might be neccessary for tactical reasons". Godongwanana concludes that "Social democracy in some countries, such as Sweden, did improve the conditions...These improvements cannot be ignored." As a socialist, however, he does not just embrace a social contract, but qualifies that the whole process has to be informed by a socialist approach that includes mass action, report-backs by the leadership and mandates by the membership.

Godongwana, therefore, expresses qualified support for a social contract. I do not entirely disagree. The problem is that this qualified and socialist-informed social contract is the only leg upon which Godongwana's position tends to stand.

The qualified acceptance of a social contract needs to be encompassed within a much wider process. A social contract can only be acceptable as as an element alongside many other measures, some of which, by their character, cannot be negotiated with capital, but can only be realised through democratic force. They must

be handled under a broader reconstruction programme. As for the social contract itself, it can be accepted if we see it as an arena of struggle, involving not only labour, capital and the state, but also civics and other forces. The accord needs also to be reproduced at regional and local level with a dialectical relationship between the national forum and regional forums. There needs to be a relationship between these forums and industry forums and the multiple factory initiatives to restructure production patterns. The objective of engagement is both to influence and to expose and discredit capital in the eyes of society as a whole. A socialist ideology must inform the basis of engagement in this process – which underscores the central role that the SACP as a key element of the left has to play in the process.

...we should, whilst not pretending that capitalist parameters are non-existent, begin to advance positions that take society away from capitalist development.

Sketching an alternative – towards a reconstruction programme

Handling the matter in this light bypasses the danger of seeing a social contract as the only form of manoeuvre available to the left within contours imposed by capital. Instead of this limited viewpoint, we should, whilst not pretending that capitalist parameters are non-existent, begin to advance positions that take society away from capitalist development. This should best be seen as a process.

It is my view that, already within the present situation, elements of an alternative path of development are to be found in embryo. Cosatu is discussing the notion of "social leadership", in which social forces such as trade unions, civics and the rural poor develop manifestos that become the basis and the precondition for their support of parties in the coming political electoral contests. This is, I believe, a strategic advance and, if correctly handled, would mean that working class perspectives would be firmly placed in the unfolding political process. This new notion of social leadership is important, provided it is not fetishised, thus undermining the important role of political organisations. We need to blend social movements and political organisation.

There are also other positive embryonic factors. We have a unique civic movement that, with all its problems, has maintained and

sustained its grassroots base over the past 10 years. It is a civic movement which has clearly posed the question of the decommodification of land through the control of land by elected trusts. The civic movement has also put on the agenda the whole notion of people's development banks. The essential principle of popular control in these projects is a positive development and a pointer towards a democratic, non-profit form of development. These aspects need to be looked at and developed by socialist economists. It remains the challenge of all socialists to conceptualise the role of civics in the post-apartheid South Africa, bearing in mind their significance as organs of self activity of the popular masses.

Looking to other embryonic possibilities, some left economists have recently raised the possibility of a new government ensuring that the millions of rands of public funds in large financial institutions like Old Mutual and Sanlam are used for progressive development. Related to this is the 25% of the present economy that is in public hands, and the milions of rands of workers' funds. There are also many possibilities for a future democratic state redirecting taxation. This gives us a significant leverage to influence the direction and the model of the economy. The same can be said of the R8 billion lying idle in the stock exchange. We need a strong state to force capitalists to invest this idle capital in productive investments.

The essence of my input is that there are objective conditions for a socialist advance, which can be realised through a dynamic and creative route under the conditions of democracy that we are in the process of creating. Our major challenge presently is to evolve an anticapitalist path of development. This is our immediate challenge.

The concept of an anticapitalist path does not imply an immediate supersession of capitalism. But it does imply a reorientation of the logic of accumulation to include the basic needs of the people. This ought to be the essential objective of our participation in the National Economic Forum.

At the same time, while bending the logic of accumulation, we need also to challenge the logic itself. This means transferring certain areas of economic activity away from the mediation of the market to society via the state. The state should not just intervene on broad policy, but must be actually involved in economic production. At the same time, historical evidence shows that such state controlled concerns must give room to effective producer control over the labour process and over macro-investment decisions.

Finally, all of these possibilities will remain utopia if the present state is not effectively restructured. Such restructuring should include the evolution of mechanisms to facilitate civil society's interaction with the state, as well as the creation and development of the capacity of the weaker organs of civil society.

In this intervention I have tried to carry the social contract debate forward. I have deliberately not confined myself to the politics and ideology that should inform such a contract. I have tried to go beyond these concerns to argue for an integrated approach. There may well be corporate pressures that lead to a social contract, and while acknowledging these we should also not hide the limitations of such a contract. I have tried to outline a number of programmes that might withstand and sidestep the tendency simply to revive capitalism. The challenge is to propel the advance towards socialism. ☭

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Renewal – the NUMSA route?

At its July Congress, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) passed a resolution on "Political Democracy" which included a call for COSATU to move out of its alliance with the ANC after next year's elections. The resolution also endorsed a resolution from an earlier NUMSA congress calling for a Workers' Party. **Amos Masondo** ***looks at the NUMSA resolution.***

Amos Masondo

THE NUMSA resolution on Political Democracy in general and on a Workers' Party and unity of the left in particular is, obviously, an important intervention into the broader debate. No socialist, honestly examining the internal and external political situation, can afford to dogmatically outline a path to socialism. The collapse of eastern European socialism, and the new terrain on which we find ourselves in South Africa, make it urgent for the left to re-examine strategies, alliances and tactical approaches. There is no book or set of books, no authority, to which we can turn for simple blueprints. We need to benefit from collective wisdom, engaging the broadest range of left and progressive forces.

Turning to the NUMSA resolution, let me make some basic qualifications clear, right from the start:

◉ NUMSA, as an independent organisation, has every right to take its

own decisions, regardless of whether these are in conflict with positions adopted by, say, the ANC or the SACP;

◉ Usually conference decisions reflect a consensus within an organisation with more than one tendency. Resolutions are a product of struggles within an organisation, and they often display inconsistencies and a certain vagueness;

◉ In the case of this specific NUMSA resolution, there are some ideas that are perfectly compatible with (and in many cases enrich) the ideas recently developed at the SACP strategy conference. The resolution calls for the strengthening of the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance at all levels, it calls for consistent mass struggles and a restructuring of the Peace Accord. It rejects any constitutional arrangement that will enable majority positions to be vetoed. It calls for voter education structures and election monitoring mechanisms. It calls for accountability and a clear programme of action.

There are, however, some parts of the resolution that require scrutiny. Paragraph 2.1 of the resolution correctly stresses the importance of COSATU's independence of political parties and of government (now and in a post-apartheid dispensation). This position is informed by the need to separate the state from the organs of civil society. So far, so good.

Paragraph 10.4 then picks up the argument in its own way:

◉ "Once an Interim Government of National Unity is established and the ANC is part of it, we should not have a formal alliance with the ANC. We should deal with the ANC as part of the government of the day through engagements in forums such as the NEF (National Economic Forum), NMC (National Manpower Commission), etc."

Here we encounter, in the first place, a major inconsistency. How can you argue that it is necessary now for workers to build and nurture an alliance, when your stated intention is to break the alliance within a year? How can you call for electoral support for the ANC on the one hand, and having installed it in government, only deal with it suspiciously across the table? Why should workers be reduced to playing a watchdog role, and not be directly involved in an ongoing political struggle?

It is incorrect for us to assume that negative historical examples, where liberation movements have sidelined workers' movements and workers' interests after coming to power, will automatically occur in South Africa. At best this is defeatism, at worst it is an abandonment of the workers' struggle for broad (including political)

empowerment.

The key error in this formulation is its more or less explicit assumption that the ANC is the antagonist of tomorrow. Workers, therefore, need to prepare to engage in struggle against the ANC, from the outside. In practice this means a situation where workers would stand aside and pontificate from a distance on the political situation, and in relation to decisions and processes that affect their lives and that are critical to our collective future.

Political influence and hegemony are won through struggle, and this often requires a multi-pronged approach. An ideological struggle for working class influence and hegemony can only be won through ongoing contact and exchange.

Some of the clauses of the NUMSA resolution also appear to assume that the ANC government will equal the sum total of ANC organisation. It assumes that all the ANC represents, and all that it does at present, will be swallowed into government. Is it not our responsibility as revolutionaries to ensure that, even though the ANC must win elections, constitute a government, send people into civil service, etc., it is not reduced to government? We have a duty to ensure that the ANC regions and branches become the places where the community assembles to debate political issues, and continues to exercise power. The NUMSA resolution, if implemented, would reinforce the dissolution of the ANC as a popular organisation connected to the masses.

If we do not want a Stalinist bureaucracy or a bourgeois state and a bourgeois ANC political party, it is part of NUMSA's job to reinforce the character of the ANC as a broad national liberation movement whose tasks do not end with elections. The ANC must exist actively in and outside of parliament.

The ANC, as it is today, is an achievement of unity of the oppressed. It has been a revolutionary organisation committed to a social programme going beyond conventional bourgeois liberties. Its programme, the Freedom Charter, has an orientation that can accommodate socialist developments. In fact, the Morogoro Strategy and Tactics Conference commits the liberation movement to socialism. The ANC has made contributions to the broad left movement in South Africa, it is our job to strengthen and reinvigorate this trend, not simply write off the ANC as a petty-bourgeois or bourgeois project. ☭

The role of trade unions in the transition

From an address by **CYRIL RAMAPHOSA,**
Secretary General of the ANC, to the SACTWU National Conference
JUNE 19, 1993

1. The role of organised labour since Codesa

There can be little doubt that trade unions, and COSATU in particular, have played a critical role in driving the negotiations process forward, and keeping the process on track, when the forces of reaction have attempted to place roadblocks in the way of democratisation. As the most organised sector of the mass movement, the unions have spear-headed the active involvement of civil society in the political process. In doing this, they have demanded that the process should belong to all the people of South Africa. They have said it does not only belong to those parties at the negotiating table, many of whom are illegitimate creations of apartheid, and whose only interest is in delaying the transformation of our country.

Many workers are concerned that trade unions appear to have been excluded from the negotiations process, and that COSATU's application to sit at Codesa was not granted. While this concern is understandable, it is sometimes incorrectly concluded that workers have no role or influence in the negotiations process. Even if COSATU was sitting at Codesa there would be no guarantee that workers would be actively participating in the process. There is an inherent tension in national negotiations, whether at the political or socio-economic level, of how you involve mass formations actively in the negotiations, negotiations which are often complex and move rapidly. We haven't yet found a successful formula to fully involve our people in the negotiations, whether in the ANC or other organisations.

Nethertheless, trade union and popular pressure has played an immense role.

Take the example of our demand for an interim government and a constituent assembly. Not so long ago, a wide range of 'opinion formers' in South Africa, including the liberal press, and even some in our own movement, were saying that these demands were unattainable. What was unrealistic yesterday has today become broadly accepted as inevitable, directly as a result of mass pressure.

This pressure has been exercised in hundreds of different ways, some less dramatic, some high-profile. Most importantly, faced with a barrage of brutal counter-revolutionary violence, our people have refused to give up or abandon the process, but have maintained their political will and vision of democratic transformation. In addition to our liberation movement, credit must go to organisations such as the trade unions, tempered in the furnace of the fiercest struggles, which have not flinched from the goals we have set ourselves, despite the vicious onslaught we have faced.

The consistency of our workers in articulating their political demands has been matched by their preparedness to take action whenever necessary.

The consistency of our workers in articulating their political demands has been matched by their preparedness to take action whenever necessary.

The deadlock created by the regime at Codesa 2 last May, together with the Boipatong massacre, created the most serious political crisis in the period since February 1990. The two months of rolling mass action, involving hundreds of thousands of workers, culminated in the massive general strike of over 4 million workers on August 3-4 1992. This action was instrumental in laying the basis for the Record of Understanding on 26 September 1992, which saw the regime retreat from the positions it had taken at Codesa 2.

The assassination of Comrade Chris Hani on April 10 this year was met with an overwhelming national outpouring of grief and anger. Linked to this was the enormous political frustration which our people were feeling with the continued delaying tactics of the regime, and the lack of concrete results being delivered by the

negotiations process. Workers responded spontaneously to the attack on the leader who they saw as embodying their hopes and aspirations.They also responded overwhelmingly to the alliance call for national action in support of our political demands: setting of an election date, joint control of security forces and setting up of the TECs. Within one week we saw two of the biggest stayaways in the history of our country. This militant but disciplined mass action was a key factor in leading to the setting of an elections date for April 27 1993 – possibly the greatest breakthrough the negotiations process has yet seen.

Through this brief history, one is not trying to suggest that the only role workers can play in the negotiations process is as some sort of deadlock breaking mechanism! Rather, it is important to see that the central role workers have played in mass struggles linked to the negotiations process, has been key in driving the negotiations process forward.

Behind all the technical debates and specialist language over which negotiators argue at the World Trade Centre is ultimately one decisive question – the question of power. The real source of our power, which is ultimately greater than any power they can wield, is support from the masses of our people. This is something we should never forget or take for granted.

2. Civil society initiatives

COSATU took the initiative last year to draft an accord with the employers organisation Saccola, attempting amongst other things to address the deadlock at Codesa 2. This was a groundbreaking initiative in that it helped to forge a national consensus on what was needed to achieve a political settlement, end the violence, and begin the process of economic reconstruction.

The trade unions have wisely taken the view that political negotiations are only one site of struggle, albeit an important one. A number of other areas were identified as critical sites of struggle, which couldn't wait for the election of a new government.

In the first instance, it was clearly understood that the regime sought to implement a package of socio-economic restructuring which would effectively entrench power in existing hands, and prevent a democratic government from dealing with the legacy of apartheid. Campaigns were therefore imple-mented, often successfully, to halt government's programmes of unilateral restructuring, whether at the level of privatisation, taxation, health, education and so on.

Secondly, processes were initiated to democratise decision making and

introduce new programmes for housing, electrification, drought relief, local government, and regional and national economic development. This saw the springing up of trilateral and multilateral forums at all these levels, despite the initial refusal of the government to relinquish what it regarded as its sole prerogative in these areas. These forums have been slowed down by government's reluctance to co-operate, but should hopefully begin delivering the goods to our people in the near future.

In taking up these and other issues, COSATU has correctly identified the fact that it has to look at the concerns and interests of all working people in South Africa, and not confine itself to a narrow focus on the workplace concerns of its own members.

A third area which the trade unions have spearheaded has been to begin looking at how our industries can be restructured, how to save and create jobs, and how to reorientate the economy to meet the needs of our people.

In taking up these and other issues, COSATU has correctly identified the fact that it has to look at the concerns and interests of all working people in South Africa, and not confine itself to a narrow focus on the workplace concerns of its own members. I do not accept the argument of those who say that trade union members are some sort of privileged labour aristocracy, divorced from the unemployed and the very poor. Those trade union members are from the same commu-nity, indeed the same families as the unemployed and poor. Trade union members are still struggling for a living wage, job security, decent housing and all the other things all working people are striving for.

The connection between all these socio-economic initiatives and the process of political transition needs to be clearly understood. These initiatives are still taking place in a situation where political and economic power remain concentrated in the hands of a minority. We therefore need to be careful that the processes we are embarking on address peoples immediate needs, but don't place blockages in the way of long-term change. Because these programmes

confines of current power relations, there is a danger that agreements reached today could inhibit a future democratic society from introducing measures aimed at far-reaching transformation.

4. Programme for Reconstruction and Development

Workers have a role to play in restruturing our country from the ruins of apartheid. The alliance is of the view that if elections do not result in a real change in people's lives, they will be meaningless. Conversely, we realise that without political power being transferred to a democratic state, it will not be possible to implement a meaningful programme of socio-economic transformation. COSATU and the ANC have arrived independently at the same conclusion that if the new democracy has any hope of succeeding, we need a programme for Reconstruction and Development which will be driven by democratic forces in civil society, together with a new democratic state.

This programme needs to be developed now and workers must play a crucial role in developing it.

Although the pro-gramme will have to be spear-headed by a new democratic state, which will have access to resources and power, the programme will only succeed if it is mass-driven. The fledgling democracy will be surrounded by all sorts of hostile forces which want it to fail, both locally and internationally. Our mass formations, particularly trade unions, civics, and others will have to fully involve the people, together with the democratic state, and our international allies, in implementing and defending the programme. Our people will do this if they have particpated in drawing up the programme and see that it is addressing their basic needs in a concrete and systematic way.

5. Role of Trade Unions in the political process in the run-up to elections

I have been asked "how will trade union concerns and worker rights be accomodated" in the political process and in the run-up to elections. But this is the wrong question! The real issue is not how trade union concerns will be "accomodated". Rather we should be asking how do we as trade unions and workers **assert** our rights, and make sure that no political party is in a position to ignore us. If we start talking about being "accomodated" we have lost half the battle already.

The ANC, in policy guidelines adopted at our National Conference in May last year says: "Workers have fought long and hard for their right to set up independent trade unions, their right to engage in collective

bargaining and their right to strike. These rights must be protected in the Bill of Rights, which should be supplemented by a Workers' Charter..."

The ANC is not going to draft this Workers' Charter – obviously this must be done by workers and their trade unions. COSATU has correctly argued that it can't by itself draw up the Charter, but that it must be drawn up by as broad a range of trade unions as possible. While we know that some difficulties have been experienced in this regard, we think that it is important that the planned Workers' Summit goes ahead, so that an authoritative document comes from workers to be fed into the constitutional process.

Beyond becoming part of the platform of the ANC-led election campaign, these demands of workers should also be put to other organisations and political parties. Any party which wants to trample on worker rights must know that it will face the wrath of workers. Already, a number of the proposals coming from the NP, DP, and other parties are fundamentally anti-worker in character. COSATU and its affiliates must stand up and challenge this, as you have recently begun to do.

Trade unions have a special role to educate workers who have been isolated and denied basic information about the political situation and their rights.

6. Role of Trade Unions in the elections, and the effect of this on Trade Union independence

What is the role of trade unions in the elections? First and foremost, it is to go to the millions of workers, organised and unorganised. Tell them about the importance of our first-ever national election; the importance of a new constitution; what will be the benefit of having a new democratically-elected government; and tell them why it is absolutely essential that each and every one of them, their families and their communities vote on April 27 next year. This will be the largest mass campaign we have ever undertaken.

Trade unions have a special role to educate workers who have been isolated and denied basic information about the political situation and their rights. Trade unions should therefore

main industrial centres, and reach out to all workers in the rural areas, white farms and bantustan areas.

Trade unions like SACTWU also have a special role to play in informing the 'minority' black communities, who have been isolated to a certain extent from the politics of the African communities, who may feel slightly cynical, disillusioned or apathetic, and as a result decide not to vote in the elections, or even worse vote for the NP! The ANC feels confident that if we do our work in these communities, and break down the misinformation, propaganda, and mistrust which has been generated by apartheid, the democratic forces will get majority support in next year's elections in all black communities. This will not be because our propaganda is slicker than the NP's, but because our democratic formations will have demonstrated to people that it is in their real interests to vote for the ANC.

There is talk, in some circles, of workers losing their independence if they support parties. By engaging parties in an election, and supporting them on the basis of specific platforms, trade unions are not giving away their independence. Rather they are, from a position of independent strength, asserting their influence and their power to act in a way which furthers their members interests. Any union which wants to distance itself from the key political issues and actors, for whatever reason, gives up its ability to significantly influence the political direction the country takes. At this point in our country's history, this would be a suicidal course for workers to take. What workers need more than anything is for strong independent unions which actively engage in the process in a way which furthers their interests.

7. Conclusion

Trade unions should not apologise for playing an independent and aggressive role during the election and constitution-making process – to put forward their demands and programmes not only to the ANC, but to all other parties before and after the elections. You are not 'petitioning a government in waiting'. You have the power to ensure that worker interests are furthered – so don't ask permission to use it!

The process which is now unfolding in our country is a very exciting one. For the first time in our history, the immediate prospect exists of us taking control of our own destiny. As trade unions and workers, we should not fear this, but sieze the opportunity with both hands. It will only come to us once. ☭

Developing a strategic perspective for the Coloured Areas in the Western Cape

by Max Ozinsky and Ebrahim Rasool

This discussion paper is based on and enriched by the forums that have been convened since 1991 to address ANC strategy in regard to the coloured* community in the Western Cape. In this paper we try to pull together much of what has already been discussed. We hope that our strategy will be concretised and actual work will result. This discussion document tries to provoke debate and discussion to that end.

1. What is the coloured community?

1.1 Demographics

According to Westgro, the population of what they define as the Western Cape (roughly the same as the ANC and SACP Western Cape region) is:

Coloured	1 919 000	52%
African	920 000	25%
White	827 000	23%
Totals	3 666 000	100%

Of this overall total, 3 281 000 (89%) are urban and 385 000 (11%) are rural.

The coloured group is the majority of the population of our region. As an ANC-led alliance, we cannot claim to represent the majority in our region if we do not draw a significant

*** A note of caution on the term "Coloured"**

There is a problem with the terminology that we are forced to use in this paper. In particular, the word "coloured" and the idea of a cohesive coloured racial or ethnic group or even community is contentious. In this paper we use the term "coloured", not to identify a specific homogeneous community defined by one culture, language, or set of values. Rather we use this term to assist us in talking about a set of communities spread across the Western Cape region in particular, who have a similar experience of apartheid. They have been defined by apartheid and they been forced to live together. The effects of racial classification have been real and, in some ways, there is a consciousness amongst people in these communities that they form a defined community.

At the same time, the short-hand term "coloured" should not deceive us about the marked differences that exist within this group of people. Nor does the term imply that such a community should be developed.

proportion of support from this group.

The second conclusion to be drawn from this data is that the coloured group is overwhelmingly urbanised and resident in the Greater Cape Town metropolitan area.

1.2 Beyond the demographics

What are the features of this community that we need to take into account when formulating strategies?

1.2.1 Socio-economic features and the working class

The coloured communities have, to some extent, been privileged through certain apartheid laws, in particular, the Coloured Labour Preference Area. Since the scrapping of this law, but not only because of its repeal, coloured people have been faced with significant unemployment. For example, less than 10% of school leavers in 1992 will find jobs in the formal sector of the economy. In the past year, retrenchments have increased significantly.

A spiral of unemployment, poverty, crime and gangsterism exists in many of the coloured areas. The effects of this poverty are a widespread inability to pay rents and basic municipal services, resulting in electricity and phone cuts, as well as evictions. Increasingly, people lack money for food.

Besides these features, reliance on social welfare is a major aspect of people's lives. Almost every working class household is dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, on pensions, grants, disability maintenance or other forms of social welfare services.

We need to develop an understanding of how these issues affect people's perceptions and mould their responses. Are the strategies that were used in the 1980s still appropriate today? For example, can we only rely on blaming apartheid and the government for poor living standards, when many people perceive the problem to be caused by "blacks taking over"?

The trade unions, in particular the COSATU affiliates SAMWU and SACTWU, have a substantial membership from the coloured areas, and a wider influence over many working class people in these areas. The process of building these unions and affiliating them to COSATU has had a significant influence on the consciousness of important sections of the working class. At the same time, however, many of the members of COSATU unions do not necessarily support the ANC, although amongst worker leaders there is widespread support. We need to do more to deepen our understanding of what issues can be used to win increasing support amongst both organised and unorganised workers.

1.2.2 The middle class

Besides the large working class population, is a fairly well-off and significant middle class made up of state employees, professionals and business people. This middle class is developed in settled areas like parts of Athlone, parts of Mitchells Plain, and areas of the Northern and Southern Suburbs.

Members of this group may not be easily won over to a support of the National Party, but they may equally be reluctant to support the ANC for a variety of reasons. These include the residue of Unity Movement ideas that still exists in the Peninsular.

1.2.3 Religion

In speaking about the coloured communities, we need to keep in mind the heterogeneity within this group. Religion and culture are important aspects of this diversity. Two main religions play a significant role within the coloured communities – Christianity and Islam. Both these religions are, themselves, not homogeneous, and many of the patterns of difference within them are similar.

There are significant numbers of people who do not actively practise their religion but retain links with their religious tenets. There are those who are active practitioners of their religions, and who evaluate politics from that perspective. Some among them are politically progressive and see their political beliefs as a consequence of their religious convictions. Others are much more fundamentalist, or politically right-wing conservative as a result of their religious doctrine.

The esteem in which progressive religious leaders are held is, as a result, quite diverse. An Archbishop Tutu or an Imam Gabier are heroes for some, while they are viewed with suspicion or even as villains by others.

To date we have had very little success projecting the positions of the ANC on religion. The National Party, while it has an atrocious history with regard to religious freedom and while it openly projects itself as a "Christian" party, has managed to portray the ANC-alliance as being anti-religious. We need to find ways of convincingly putting across our message that religious freedom is a basic human right, and that most ANC members are also religious. We believe that all religious groups have an equal right to exist and that no one religion must be favoured by the state. In particular, we need to project our understanding that religion should help liberate our people, and not be misused to keep oppressors in power.

1.2.4 Culture

Understanding the cultures of these

communities is important for understanding both the self-identity and consciousness of the people making up the coloured groups. From our general analysis of these communities it is clear that there is not one single coloured culture, but rather a collection of interwoven cultures and identities. At the same time, there are important unifying aspects.

Firstly, there is the question of language. Afrikaans and Kaaps are widely used and we need obviously to address people in our media and speeches in the language with which they are most comfortable.

Secondly, there is a widespread identification amongst people of their own collective dispossession through the hundreds of years of brutality that they have experienced under white rule. Many understand this oppression as going back to the times of slavery and of the dispossession of the Khoi. One way in which this is reflected is in a lumpen humour, which combines a general lack of respect for authority with an alienation from politics and politicians in general.

Thirdly, there are enduring cultural groups and organisations, the Coons, the choirs and ballroom dancing to name a few, that all play an important role in the cultural life of these communities. There is also a widespread influence of American popular music culture and dancing – Disco, Hip Hop and Rap – amongst many youth, although these forms are often alienating for many older people in the communities.

1.2.5 Group identity and consciousness

It is debatable whether the coloured communities constitute a distinct ethnic group. As has been said already, the coloured group is heterogeneous, but the effect of apartheid legislation was to force people into a convenient category and this has led to the formation of some kind of self-identity.

In fact, apartheid has had two contradictory effects on these communities:

1. It physically forced together dispersed groups of people through racial classification, while dividing existing communities and redefining them with the Group Areas Act. It restricted access to resources and facilities on a racial basis and it divided these coloured communities from Africans. To some extent, an element of coloured unity and identity has emerged from the experience of apartheid, group areas, gutter education, etc.

2. However, there are also important differences in the way in which different sectors went through these

experiences. The resulting consciousness that emerged from the experience has not been uniform.

This suffering under apartheid, in addition, did not necessarily create bonds and joint campaigns with others also suffering under apartheid. Job reservation and other privileges, relative to African communities, often made coloured people intermediaries in the racist relationship between whites and the rest of the oppressed. For example, the use of the word "kaffir" in the coloured communities has been common, and whilst its use was interrupted by the 1980s, it is starting to re-emerge in certain quarters.

These kinds of sentiments are currently being reinforced by the manner in which many companies are implementing what they are calling "affirmative action programs". For many businesses, affirmative action means employing only African people. This is completely in contradiction with the understanding of affirmative action that we have as the ANC alliance. In our view, affirmative action should be non-racial and should apply to those who have been oppressed and disadvantaged by apartheid. However, this experience of the "affirmative action" of sections of big business has a negative effect on the consciousness of many coloured people. It reinforces the impression that the end of apartheid will materially disadvantage them.

Anti-communism also has some resonance in these communities. This is largely, but not exclusively, attributable to state propaganda. Anti-communism results largely from state attempts to feed on the religious convictions of people and from the portrayal of communism as being anti-god. In addition, Muslims have run a sustained campaign against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. As information emerges from the former Soviet Union, stories abound on the repression of religion. There is, therefore, suspicion of the tri-partite alliance.

2. Organising in the coloured communities

2.1 Our experience from the recent past – The UDF

There are a variety of sectors among coloured communities where struggle and resistance were once vibrant. One thinks of the youth and professional bodies, for instance. They all felt comfortable under the broad banner of the UDF. Undoubtedly, the UDF was the leading force in politics in the Western Cape in the 1980s. It captured people's imagination, and led in the coloured communities to a largely successful anti tricameral parliament

campaign in 1983-4. We need to examine this phenomenon in order to see which lessons are relevant to our present situation.

The UDF was able to provide a home for organisations while they retained their character and identity:

- it was political, but also had a strong emphasis on bread and butter issues;
- its leadership reflected the breadth of the Western Cape population;
- it was able to network with individuals and organisations providing a broader alliance than its formal affiliates;
- it had a strong moral appeal because of the association of key religious figures with it;
- it had a flexible approach to structures, being strong on affiliation, but relying on groups of activists in area committees to accomplish work;
- it maintained a high media profile both in the press and through its own media;
- its campaigns were carried by those who were most closely affected by them, for example the constituency committees for the anti-election campaign and the African township structures dealing with the effects of the Koornhof Bills;
- it was able to project both youth and senior people as its leadership;
- it took up campaigns in an imaginative and dramatic way.

While the UDF had many achievements, we must not over-romanticise the 1980s as a period of great resistance for coloured communities. Those struggles did succeed in preventing the cooption of the coloured communities into the ruling bloc, in intervening in their political consciousness and in providing them with a vehicle for their outrage and frustrations at the state.

Yet we must honestly ask how permanent these gains are. Have the 1980s left us with a legacy of organisation and structures? Have the 1980s created non-racialism, acceptance of African leadership and a sense of common nationhood?

In a sense, our work in the 1980s has indeed laid the basis for all these, but there is nothing guaranteed or timeless about any of this. We need to examine the period from late 1989 to today to understand why a certain discontinuity has occurred.

2.2 The ANC and the coloured communities

2.2.1 How we have mobilised as the ANC

Initially after its legal relaunch, the ANC was not seen to have a clear program for work in communities other than the recruitment of members and the launching of branches. There

After its legal relaunch the ANC placed no particular focus on mass work and, in time, an ambiguity developed between the ANC and the Civics.

was no particular focus on mass work and, in time, an ambiguity developed between the ANC and the Civics. Who took up the issues? This led to the dissipation of much of the inherent strength of mass politics in coloured areas.

When the ANC began to take up campaigns, this was done largely at a regional and high profile level, which did not really build strength on the ground. Often the support that developed for mass action was not consolidated.

Politics became centralised and this marginalised the already weakened MDM structures. In this way, a key component of our access to a variety of constituencies was lost. We also often made errors as we sought short cuts to these constituencies, by focusing on figure-heads and not empowering the activist structures below them which had been proven in the past to be key factors in reaching constituencies.

2.2.2 The question of "African leadership"

It is true that throughout the 1980s the ideals of the ANC, as expressed through the underground, the UDF and the other formations of the mass democratic movement, assumed a significant hegemony over the coloured group. It was largely impossible for authoritative leadership to exist within these communities without it coming out at important points in opposition to apartheid and the NP. This is no longer necessarily the case. Tendencies to political apathy and non-involvement in these communities are now much stronger.

One of the central issues in this process relates to the perception in our own ranks and more broadly about African leadership within the ANC. The following quote is a good example:

"We brown people are now looking forward to the time when the ANC rules. But have we ever stopped to ask if the ANC is going to do the same to us [as the NP]? I believe I am right when I say that the ANC's first priority lies with its own people – the blacks...Where do uneducated brown people fit in? We must think carefully where our future welfare lies before election day dawns."

Bekommerd ("Worried") of Ceres in a letter to ***Rapport Metro***, *21 February 1993.*

In our region we face a unique position, African people are not the majority of the population. Unfortunately there has been a lack of clarity, understanding and debate on what is meant by "African leadership" in the struggle. This has created confusion in our own ranks and it has led to disillusionment amongst many coloured activists.

Any legitimate assertion of the importance of African leadership must relate to the position of the African majority as the most nationally oppressed group in our country. This position of extreme national oppression means that the main content of our national liberation struggle is the liberation of the African majority. The African majority is the most reliable force for the completion of the tasks of national liberation. This means that there is a special role for the African masses, in particular the working class in the national liberation struggle. The need for "African leadership" should not refer to the position of individuals within leading structure of the liberation movement.

2.2.2 Partial successes

The track record of ANC organisation since 1990 in organising in the coloured communities has been extremely uneven. There are, however, a number of strong ANC branches in these communities, and it is important to look closely at the reasons for success. The following points can be made about strong branches:

1. These are branches which are actively engaged in campaigns around local issues directly affecting people. A process of struggle exists in the community and that struggle unifies the community.

2. They are branches in which the branch leadership plays a strong and cohesive role. The Branch Executive Committee actually provides direction and leadership to the branch and the community and has come to be seen as the leadership of the community.

3. The branch relates to other organisations and influential individuals in a manner which incorporates them rather than excludes them.

As can be seen from the above three points the role of leadership is crucial in building strong ANC structures in an area. Indeed one of the most interesting developments in the past year is the growth of the influence of the ANC in areas such as Delft and Macassar. These are areas which are newly developed and where community structures are in the process of being formed. They are areas where people had high expectations about their new homes and their ability to build their lives. These expectations are being shattered by high bond repayments and the poor construction of their houses.

These issues unite people in communities which are still developing cohesion and inner life, where there is no existing established community leadership. In this situation, the ANC can become the vehicle for the emerging leadership of the community. The ANC can be seen to be at the centre of people's struggles. This is reflected in the kind of leadership that exists within the ANC in these branches. It also affects the kind of membership that becomes part of the ANC – older people start joining.

By comparison, in many of the "established" coloured areas, the leadership of ANC branches that has emerged is different. The leading figures in the branches are often activists developed from the struggles of the 1980s. In general, these comrades are often young, students or unemployed. They are often not the heads of families and are not seen to be facing the same problems as the rest of the community. This group of activists comes to be regarded as a sub-culture within the community - they are primarily involved in politics and are thought of as "adventurous".

We know from past and present successes that we can develop progressive political organisation in the coloured communities. But we also know that this requires a clear understanding of what we are trying to do, political gains and allegiances cannot be taken for granted.

Conclusion

This discussion document is by no means conclusive. We have tried to raise questions to help us clarify both our understanding and approach to the coloured question. There are no easy solutions, but we hope that this document will help to stimulate a debate which will take us on the road to developing a clear strategic approach to the coloured communities in the Western Cape. ☭

DOCUMENTS

SACP National Strategy Conference

Johannesburg, 20-23 May 1993

THE changed global situation, the new national terrain and the SACP's massive growth in membership (from 2000 to 50,000 in under three years) all make the consolidation of a clear strategic perspective essential, and at times difficult.

We made considerable progress in this direction in our December 1981 8th SACP Congress. But, inevitably, there was much unfinished business. For all these reasons, the SACP convened a National Strategic Conference in Johannesburg (20-23 May 1993).

The main objective of the conference was to deepen strategic debate and discussion within the SACP and to consolidate the party around a broad strategic orientation.

The conference deliberately had a workshop character. We were not drawing up a programme, or a manifesto. We were not a resolutions conference. We were also not seeking a cosmetic unity produced by drafting gymnastics.

As it happens, considerable consensus was achieved.

The conference workshopped three main papers:

1. **"The Role of the SACP in the Transition to Democracy and Socialism"** (see *The African Communist*, 1st quarter 1993);

2. **"Empowering our people and countering the medium term threat of Counter-Revolution and Destabilisation"**; and

3. **"Towards an SACP International Policy".**

We publish here amendments and additions to the first paper, and the amended version of the second.

DOCUMENT ONE

The role of the SACP in the transition to democracy and socialism

THIS conference endorsed the main thrust of the original paper. However, there was a strong feeling that the brief section in the original (***"The SACP since July 1990"*** – see *AC 1st quarter 1993, p.14-5*) needed extending. In particular, more attention needed to be given to a more critical assessment of our organisational weaknesses. There was also a feeling that the independent role of the SACP was not sufficiently highlighted throughout the original paper.

1. The state of party organisation since July 1990

The organisational gains of our party, acknowledged in the paper, are basically correct. We need, however, to more starkly acknowledge our weaknesses. These include:

i. large numbers of party members are merely formally attached to the party. They are not **active** members. Our party, however, is meant to be a **party of activists**.

ii. cadre development is sorely lacking

iii. our organisational structures are weak. Many of our branches and districts do not function properly, and regional structures need to be strengthened.

iv. there is a lack of gender sensitivity in our organisation.

There is a need, in short, for **ideological** and **organisational** consolidation of the party.

Suggestions on how to deal with these challenges include:

i. we need a better break-down of the composition of our membership

ii. we need a national organiser, or organisers.

iii. we need party schools at national, regional and local levels. The political bureau is requested to look at

this.

2. The independent role of the SACP
The paper tends to dilute the role of the party. It needs to clearly set out the specific identity and independent role of the party. It needs to more clearly assert the vanguard role of the party.

Particular concerns regarding the party's independent role were:

i) *The balance between building the SACP and the ANC and MDM structures*

◉ It was recognised that it is important to build **both** the SACP **and** the ANC and MDM structures. If we are to have an effective ANC and MDM we need a strong party. We have to ensure that our members who are active in the ANC and MDM are also active in the SACP.

◉ SACP members active in the ANC and MDM have to respect the democratic decisions of those structures. This means that as representatives of those structures they may, at times, express views that are not necessarily those of the SACP. What is not acceptable is for SACP members to be the initiators of perspectives and policies in the ANC and MDM that are not consistent with SACP positions.

◉ Accountability and answerability of party comrades active in ANC and MDM structures is important – but this should not be in a mechanistic way, a once-a-week report to the SACP on "what I have done in the MDM this past week". It should also certainly not assume the form of party members going into these structures with tight SACP mandates. But helping to strengthen allied democratic formations is a matter of legitimate concern for the party.

◉ Consideration should be given to ensuring that the SACP general secretary and, perhaps, some other officials, concentrate solely on SACP activities. Similar consideration should be given to regional chairpersons and secretaries.

◉ It is vital that **forums** should be created at national, regional and local levels, bringing together SACP members who are active in various sectors – health, education, housing, economics, etc. This would help to consolidate and unify socialist perspectives in various sectors.

...helping to strengthen allied democratic formations is a matter of legitimate concern for the party

ii) *The balance between specialised and general activities of the SACP*
It is not a question of either specialisation **or** general activities. Both are necessary, a balance has to be struck between them. The SACP must, however, give a specifically socialist content to the general activities in which it takes part. This will give the SACP a specific identity and an independent profile.

This independence must also be asserted through the party's specialised activities. Examples of this would be our approach to internationalism, gender, the environment, transformation of armed forces, and our participation in support work for strike and other trade union struggles.

Our party's specific identity and independence need also to be consolidated with a consistent focus on political education and cadre development of our members.

3. Defining socialism
The basic approach in the Manifesto of our party and in the paper (see *AC 1st quarter 1993, p.15-20*) is correct. We do, however, need to be able to make these approaches more accessible.

There is also a need to pursue our debate and discussion on a number of areas. The political bureau is requested to prepare discussion papers on:

- the relationship of socialism to the market
- the economic requirements for socialism
- the different forms of social ownership of property.

Apart from these general points, some specific amendments were also suggested to this section of the original paper:

- It was felt that it needs to be more firmly underlined that multi-partyism is only **one** aspect of socialist democracy. On the same issue it is also important to say unambiguously that, while the right of parties to exist and to contest elections must be recognised, they will have to operate within the constitution and the legal parameters of a democratic dispensation.
- The many positive achievements of the former socialist countries need to be mentioned, without of course taking away the criticism of bureaucratic socialism.

Finally, the Conference felt that the sub-section entitled "Socialism in one country?" asks the wrong question. The question invites a simplistic Yes or No answer. While the sub-section raises useful points about the growth of socialism in the Soviet Union, we should not be asking such an abstract question. We need to assert our confidence in building socialism in South Africa, while giving due

recognition to the unfavourable international situation.

The South African working class

Generally this section (see *AC 1st quarter 1993, p.20-4*) was endorsed. It was felt, however, that the emphasis on the real and potential division within the working class needed to be more counter-balanced with factors fostering working class unity.

A Reconstruction Pact

This section (*AC 1st quarter 1993, p. 25-8*) was also endorsed. Clearly the reconstruction programme is a process, and its elaboration needs to be pursued. The conference also emphasised the paper's position that reconstruction must not be confined narrowly to the economic. Crucially, reconstruction must include reconstructing the state administration and its armed formations. ☭

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DOCUMENT TWO

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ARMED FORCES IN SA:

Empowering our people and countering the medium-term threat of counter revolution and destabilisation

Introduction

THERE has been some general discussion around many of these issues within ANC-led alliance ranks. Discussion of these various topics has tended, however, to suffer from a number of shortcomings. These include:

◉ In regard to the medium-term threat of COUNTER-REVOLUTION and/or DESTABILISATION, the issue has tended to be raised only superficially, and largely in the context of what negotiations compromises we should consider making.

◉ In regard to a future ARMY and POLICE, our discussion and thinking has often been limited to the issue of "integration" and/or "affirmative action". While these are important questions, they are, again, very limited approaches. The bigger questions of restructuring, demilitarisation and the strategic purpose of a future army and police service are not adequately considered.

The present paper does not pretend to offer a detailed approach to any of these crucial questions. Its purpose is, rather, to raise questions and open debate, with a view to developing a better STRATEGIC ORIENTATION to vital areas.

1. The medium term threat of counter revolution (CR)/ Destabilisation

In approaching this question it is useful, first, to distinguish between potential INSTITUTIONAL bases and potential SOCIAL bases for Counter-Revolution/Destabilistation.

1.1. Potential institutional bases for CR/Destabilisation

The main institutional threat comes from sections of the existing regime's armed forces.

★ The SADF

The SADF has 505,000 (mainly white males) – this figure obviously includes both permananent, conscript and reserve forces. It is important to realise that, large as it is, the SADF, in terms of its organisational ideology and strategic orientation is not monolithic.

There are important differences between the permanent Army on the one hand, and the other major wings of the SADF – Air Force, Navy, Medical Corps and the Citizen Force on the other hand. Within the Army, in particular, Intelligence and Counter Insurgency (special forces) sections present special problems. Fairly small in number, these are the forces whose strategic orientation and skills are geared to counter-insurgency, total strategy, Low Intensity Warfare and all of the "dirty tricks" (disinformation, third force operations, assassinations, etc.) associated with these.

Linked considerably to these Intelligence networks is a widescale web of "privatised" SADF operations – of which the CCB is just one example. Many of these front companies are commercially viable operations (security firms, airfreight companies, etc.) in their own right. This means they have a capacity to survive long after the present regime, and might be reactivated for military work years later.

★ The SAP

The SAP in mid-1991 had 109,00 members – of these 49,000 were African, 47,000 were white, 8,500 "Coloured" and 3,500 "Asian". The greater black component of the SAP is significant, although obviously, in its upper echelons, the SAP remains overwhelmingly white.

The culture, the paramilitary structures, and training of the SAP remain deeply linked to apartheid domination. As with the SADF, however, some sections of the SAP are clearly much more problematic than others, being directly associated with counter-insurgency/low intensity warfare.

Although the Security Branch (SBs) was merged with the Criminal Investigation Division (Detective

Certain sections of the regime's armed forces pose a potential threat to a future democratic government

Pic: C. Sols, Dynamic Images

Branch) in 1991, in practice the new unified division (Criminal Intelligence Services) has not substantially changed the existence, structure or operation of the former SBs. General Basie Smit (former head of the SB) is now a "super-general" in overall command of both branches.

The SB operates a number of "desks" (A-F). For instance, Desk B is responsible for technical work (telephone and post monitoring, manufacture of "devices", etc). Desk C is responsible for the ANC, SACP, etc. Within Desk C, there are a number of units – C1 is the counter-insurgency unit which was based at Vlakplaas and included the Askaris (recently said to have been disbanded); C2 is responsible for the interrogation of ANC, SACP, etc, "suspects"; and so on.

Currently, all male recruits to the SAP are given six weeks basic training in "counter-insurgency" and "riot control". Apart from this basic training for all male recruits, there are specialised Riot Units under the Internal Stability Division – with some 4000 members countrywide. Additionally, there is a new special rapid-response Riot Unit ("Unit 19"), based in Pretoria, which can be deployed anywhere in the country at short notice. It has some 2,700 members.

The SAP is, at present, in considerable crisis. The causes of the

crisis include:
◉ the illegitimacy of the police force amongst the majority;
◉ the soaring crime situation;
◉ low pay and high risk work – large numbers of police are dying every month;
◉ tensions between black and white policemen;
◉ tensions between local station commanders, some with reasonable relations with the community, and the Internal Stability Division.

At the heart of all of these contradictions is the SAP's unpreparedness for the changed political situation at present – let alone for the impending democratisation and deracialisation of coming years.

Apart from these main-line armed forces, other potential institutional bases for counter-revolution/destabilisation include:
◉ Bantustan armed forces, some of which (KZP, CDF) are highly infiltrated by the regime, and in some cases effectively commanded by it. In these cases it is, once more, Military Intelligence that is most active.
◉ Bantustan-based parties (eg. IFP)
◉ Apart from SADF and SAP intelligence networks, De Klerk's presidency has seen the rise to pre-eminence within the regime intelligence family of NIS. NIS does not have an armed operational wing, but its agents will also certainly be developing a medium-term capacity and networks to ensure an ability to weaken and destabilise a future democratic government.

An ultra-secret committee directly linked to De Klerk, and operating independently of the State Security Council and the official bureaucratic structures of NIS and DMI and the other special units of the police and army, is said to have come into existence in 1990. It is said to be co-ordinated by Michael Louw (the new NIS chief, but with years in DMI).
◉ Extreme right-wing and neo-fascist forces, like the CP, Volksfront, AWB, Wit Wolwe, etc.
◉ A network of private security firms.

Most of these potential institutional bases either singly, or in combination, have the capacity to cause considerable destabilisation in a future democracy. Whether they would have the capacity to launch and consolidate a full-scale counter-revolution would depend upon their ability to link up with:

1.2 Potential social bases for counter-revolution/destabilisation

(It is important to underline immediately that to identify certain social bases as potentially recruitable for a counter revolution/destabilisation project **is not to write all of them off**, on the contrary. It is **not** to argue that all or some of them are inherently

reactionary).

Among such potential social bases are:

◉ Medium and big capital (whether local or transnational). At present capital, and particularly big capital, is not strongly aligned towards a counter revolutionary/destabilisation strategy. However, this attitude could change, and possible motivations for a change would include:

• a perceived "communist threat";

• regional agendas (eg. a breakaway Natal).

The reasons for the lack of attractiveness of a counter revolutionary/destabilisation agenda at present for capital include:

• the growing awareness that low intensity warfare is counter-productive on the terrain of a relatively advanced capitalist economy;

• social and political stability and some kind of reconstruction is essential for a return to profitability.

◉ **White farmers and white middle strata**

The soaring crime has, in particular, been used by the extreme right to mobilise these sectors. De Klerk's anti-ANC disinformation campaign, trying to link crime to the alliance, to MK and to PF allies – especially Transkei – has backfired against him, and in favour of the CP and ultra-right ("Why negotiate with murderers?", they ask).

◉ **White workers.** The extreme right-wing has had some success in mobilising white workers on the basis of economic grievances (growing unemployment, growing social hardship) blaming the "advance" of blacks for these woes. Legitimate economic grievances are articulated with racism and appeals to white and usually Afrikaner ethnicism.

◉ **"Fourth World" blacks** – including migrants, rural peoples, the urban marginalised, southern African refugees. At various times elements from these sectors have already been recruited into vigilante and similar groups. In the medium-term, if little is done to address the major social problems that affect millions of the most marginalised workers in our country, larger numbers could become available for recruitment (on regionalist, ethnic or on a straight bribery basis) to a counter-revolutionary project.

1.3 The social and political weaknesses of a counter-revolutionary/destabilisation project

Although we should certainly take such a threat seriously, we need also to note the very real weaknesses from which it suffers. In particular there are two main weaknesses:–

• internal contradictions among actual and potential counter-revolutionary forces.
• a changed international situation.

To elaborate briefly:

1.3.1 Internal contradictions
The potential institutional and social bases we have just outlined are extremely diverse and are often mutually contradictory. These contradictions include:
• the extreme racism of the white right, which runs headlong into the aspirations of marginalised blacks who may, for instance, be IFP members or members of conservative tribal or religious formations;
• white ethnic homelanders versus black right-wing politicians with national electoral ambitions (eg. Buthelezi);
• potential class contradictions between white workers and white farmers (who want higher food prices, for instance);
• demagogic white neo-fascists (like Terreblanche) versus the retired generals (like Constand Viljoen and Tienie Groenewald). The former hope to unleash a race war, the latter want to "manage" the negotiated transition more effectively than they believe De Klerk is doing (they see him as a "Gorbachev").

These kinds of contradictions account for the extremely unstable character of, for instance, the COSAG grouping.

1.3.2 A changed world situation
The changed world situation, which despite the new difficulties it has brought, has also seen the end of the Cold War. External support is, therefore, much less assured for some "anti-communist" crusade. The major imperialist powers tend now to hope to cultivate local Violetta Chamorros and Cory Aquinos (Oscar Dhlomos, Van Zyl Slabberts, FW De Klerks) rather than Pinochets, Savimbis and Mobutus.

We should note that these factors make a full-blooded counter-revolution unlikely in the medium-term, but low-intensity destabilisation is very possible, and is less reliant on a social bloc.

1.4 What subjective errors on our side can contribute to the danger of counter-revolution/destabilisation?
◉ demagogic election promises which are unrealistic;
◉ ignoring the millions of marginalised in our country, the "4th" world;
◉ adventurism – advancing beyond our capacity to manage and to defend (this is one of the lessons we can learn from the socialist experiment in Chile in the years 1970–3);

◉ anti-white demagoguery (of the "one settler, one bullet" variety);
◉ militarism – the attempt to block destabilisation, or dampen popular discontent primarily by force of arms;
◉ statism – over-reliance on the control of the commanding heights of the state without real and substantial reconstruction, and over-reliance on bureaucratic control and methods;
◉ corruption and extravagant life-styles among the new political leadership.

1.5 Towards a comprehensive counter counter-revolutionary/ destabilisation strategy

The principal strategic task in this regard is to prevent the coming together of the diverse potential counter-revolutionary/destabilisation institutions and bases. This requires targetted, strategic work appropriate to each:

◉ **SADF and SAP** – see sections 2 and 3 below, where restructuring and demilitarisation are addressed from the dual perspective of (a) countering CR, and (b) empowering the popular masses.

◉ **Business (and western Governments)** – amongst other things there is a need for the SACP to engage in an open and principled manner with these forces, to ensure that they are not misled by anti-communist disinformation into bank-rolling a counter-revolution. Our own principled commitment to multi-party democracy, a bill of rights and constitutionality are important themes that need to be underlined, without for a moment watering-down on our socialist commitment and working class character.

◉ **White middle strata and farmers** – we need to convince them that law and order will not be achieved through military means. Social and economic reconstruction is the only viable route to curtailing soaring criminal violence.

◉ **Lower strata whites** – the progressive trade union movement is probably better placed than the SACP to espouse the economic concerns of these strata, their resentments of the monopolies, of government corruption, of collapsing public health services, etc, etc. and to separate these issues from a reactionary/racist politics. The SACP can, however, also play a role in this regard.

◉ **Marginalised blacks** (the "4th" world) – a thorough-going reconstruction process that begins to address the most pressing needs of the jobless, the homeless, the illiterate. Such reconstruction needs also to address the southern African region as

a whole.

In addition to specific programmes relating to specific sectors, we need also to underline the centrality of strong **participatory** and **direct** democracy as, apart from everything else, an important anti-counter-revolution investment. The more our people are directly and actively involved in decision-making around resource allocation, management of reconstruction, etc. the more they will be able to grasp the reality of a long-haul process of change. If national democratic change is conceived as a gift from on high, great expectations will quickly give way to disappointment and confusion, which, in turn, could become the seed-bed for counter-revolutionary mobilisation.

2. Restructuring the Armed Forces – building a new army and police service.

2.1 Introduction

Any democratic transformation that fails to develop a clear approach to the question of transforming armed formations is asking for trouble. In South Africa we face particular challenges. Unlike Zimbabwe or Mozambique, for instance, as a liberation movement we did not build up a massive, internally based liberation army before the negotiated settlement. MK's achievement, and it has been an outstanding achievement, has been to inspire and mobilise a huge (but largely unarmed) mass movement.

The main reasons for the difference in our situation are objective. Only a very small proportion of our population is an independent peasantry, and the small peasantry in our country is confined to a scattered 13% of our territory. In Zimbabwe, Mozambique, etc., the great majority of the population are peasants, and in the time of the guerrilla struggle, large stretches of the countryside were peasant terrain. It was in this social and physical terrain that hundreds of thousands of guerrillas were recruited, concealed and fed. It was in this terrain that vast liberated areas were developed.

In South Africa, at the height of our struggle in the mid to late-1980s, our main revolutionary bases (they were partially "liberated" zones) were townships (urban and rural). The main class force in our struggle was not the peasantry, but the broad working class.

Conversely, the armed formations of our opponent were not mainly external forces which could retreat out of the country (as in Mozambique, Angola, Vietnam and, to a large extent, Namibia). The apartheid war machine is largely white, but it is indigenous.

Both the SADF and SAP remain in

Proud soldiers of Umkhonto we Sizwe... much of its training has not been for a conventional army.

place, however deep in crisis the latter, in particular, might be. We have defeated apartheid strategically, the white minority bloc has no workable strategic political possibilities other than to negotiate and settle with the ANC alliance. But the SADF and SAP are not about to melt away.

The size of our own armed formations, and of our allies (including progressive bantustan forces) is relatively limited. Much of our training has not been for a conventional army.

It is clear that (especially in these circumstances) simple **integration** or **affirmative action** (as necessary as they are) will not remotely address the massive challenge we confront.

This does not mean that we are

powerless in the face of this challenge, far from it. But it does mean that we have to be strategic, intelligent and creative.

2.2 Some basic strategic goals

In the first place, the following broad strategic principles need to guide us:

◉ our longer term objective must be the radical demilitarisation of our society. A society with countless armed formations of all kinds, and awash with weaponry, is a society in which democracy and socialism will always be under threat. National security should not be restricted to military, police and intelligence matters. National security has a political, economic, social and environmental dimension.

◉ the defence force, police service and intelligence service that we build must serve (not hinder) reconstruction and democratisation. These formations must, therefore, reflect in their culture and composition the core values of the society we hope to build – democratic, unifying, non-racial and non-sexist. They must not be partisan to any specific political party.

◉ the defence force, police service and intelligence service must be under civilian control. They must be answerable to parliament and accountable to the public, through this parliament. But this civilian control should be multi-faceted, and should not just be top-down. Civilian control should include other mechanisms of accountability and a culture of public transparency. For allegations of police misconduct there should be independent complaints and investigations mechanisms. Above all in the case of the police, there must be as much bottom-up accountability to, and control by communities as is possible.

◉ a future defence force must protect a democratic South Africa from external threats (which are likely to be minimal). It should not be deployed for internal policing except in extreme circumstances, and where it is authorised specifically by parliament.

2.3 But how do we achieve these goals?

To realise our strategic goals, we also need a strategy of transition and reconstruction.

Such a strategy needs to be based, in part, on the clear understanding that neither the SADF nor the SAP are monolithic. A reconstruction strategy must relate intelligently to the numerous internal differences in skill, training, experience, racial background and political outlook.

Apart from a major effort at new recruitment, affirmative action and

integration, reconstructing these armed formations will need to appeal to the technical and professional skills, and general patriotism of many, while dealing effectively (through disbanding, early retirement, re-education) of the most notorious units and individuals.

Such a strategy of transition and reconstruction must include:

2.3.1 The rapid and transparent disbanding of all apartheid special forces, counter-insurgency units, mercenaries, dirty-tricks departments and intelligence services. The manner of the disbanding is very important. Already De Klerk has carried out some partial disbanding (early retirements of some notorious elements, the disbanding of Battalions 31 and 32, and of the Askaris). But all of this has been done more or less secretly. It is essential that a proper inventory of members of these forces is done, and that proper accounting is provided of their re-deployments. This disbanding must:

• enable the public to know where individuals from these forces are now located (we cannot rule out the possibility that some Askaris, for instance, might have been eliminated because they have too much to tell);

• be done in such a way that they do not regroup within the present army, police; or somewhere in the shadows.

2.3.2 Seeking as much effective monitoring and control of armed formations by the various multi-party transitional executive structures – the TEC sub-committees. At the same time we must not invest too many expectations in these TEC structures. Their clumsy, multi-party character, their 80%–majority decision-making requirement, and, above all, the parallel existence of the De Klerk cabinet, and the ongoing existence of the SADF and SAP in this period will make effective joint control extremely difficult.

Even after the Constituent Assembly elections, with the proposed Interim Government of National Unity, we cannot simply invest all our hopes on a governmental, top-down control.

Therefore...

2.3.3 An integral transitional strategy must focus on a multi-pronged approach to monitoring and controlling armed formations. We need, in the coming months, to utilise every possible opening to democratise and render more accountable the SAP and SADF:

• National Peace Accord structures, not least Local Dispute Resolution Committees;

• the Goldstone Commission;

• International monitors;

• an Independent Electoral Commission;
• a more robust and inquiring SABC;
• ongoing public and mass campaigns.

And finally...

2.3.4 Our whole transitional strategy on this front must be based on the perspective not just of controlling and monitoring the other side, but of the absolutely interrelated task of increasingly empowering the popular masses. In this regard we need to reflect on several areas:

2.3.4.1 Self-defence units – the SACP and ANC took the initiative to launch self-defence units in townships in late 1990, in response to the LIW-inspired violence that began sweeping through our communities. The track-record of SDUs has been uneven. In many parts of the country, they have played an heroic role, and without them in many cases our political formations would have been decimated. In other instances, however, they have been targetted for infiltration from the outside and undermined by ill-discipline and militarism from within. In these cases, rather than empowering communities, they have themselves become factors for factionalism and destabilisation. Among the difficulties we have encountered have been:
• the need for the SACP, ANC and MK, in the face of catastrophic levels of violence, to assume responsibility for developing SDUs, while at the same time calling for them to be answerable to the community, and not to specific political parties. Lines of authority and control have, therefore, often been confused.
• without any official co-operation, SDUs have had to arm themselves with unlicensed weapons of all kinds. This has increased their vulnerability to arrest and police bribery, as well as to criminal infiltration.

Whatever the shortcomings of many SDUs, however, it is clear that they cannot simply be disbanded in the present situation. Obviously discipline, proper training and real community accountability must be enforced. But there cannot be any unilateral disbanding.

2.3.4.2 Marshals
The alliance marshals have, particularly in the last period, proved themselves to be an effective force in many cases. There are now thousands of alliance marshals throughout the country. In July 1992 and again in April 1993 (following Cde Chris Hani's assassination) thousands of marshals effectively exercised joint control over policing with the SAP, the NPA structures and the international monitors.

The level of training and the

equipping of our marshals is very uneven and usually rudimentary. Nonetheless, they have shown themselves to be a highly disciplined and courageous people's force.

The international police monitors and NPA structures are beginning to offer training to ANC (and also IFP) marshals. We need to explore this possibility as a matter of urgency.

2.3.4.3 Community based Peace Corps
In the last days of his life, Cde Chris Hani launched the call for a community-based Peace Corps. The idea has been taken up in a general way by a very wide range of forces – the alliance, the SACC, big business, the regime, NPA structures, international monitors, etc.

Cde Chris' intervention was motivated, in part, by the dilemmas we have encountered with the SDUs. The Peace Corps would be community-based and controlled and probably (for the moment) housed under NPA structures. The PCs would share with the SAP responsibility for maintaining peace in communities. The PCs would be paid a basic wage for a period of service, would be provided uniforms, and training in peace-keeping as well as general skills. The PCs would perform both a peace-keeping and a reconstruction role.

The PC idea is likely to take-off in the near future and, while these PCs will not, and should not be narrowly ANC-led alliance structures, their success or failure will depend on our active involvement in them.

The SDUs, the alliance Marshal structures, and the Peace Corps all have the potential to empower the popular masses in our country, and to assume an effective, joint responsibility for policing. They can provide an important counter-weight to any anti-democratic project of destabilisation.

The connections between these popular formations, and between them, MK, and a future police force need also to be thought through. All of these popular formations should provide an effective recruiting base for a democratic Police Service.

At the same time, particularly in the case of the Peace Corps, a longer term reconstruction perspective, which is not just confined to policing, needs to be developed. ☭

"Social movements have to fight the international system"

– an interview with Martin Khor Kok Peng –

Martin Khor Kok Peng is director of the Third World Network, the World Rainforest Movement, and civic groups in Malaysia. Khor is a renowned critic of the World Bank and its "structural adjustment" policies. He recently attended a conference in Johannesburg of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) on the role of the World Bank in South Africa. **Patrick Bond** *conducted the interview.*

QUESTION: *What is the Third World Network?*

It's a combination of groups that are involved in community problems, environmental issues and research. These are groups fighting against poverty and for a more equitable form of development within and between countries. We are trying to orient development towards the fulfilment of human needs and environmental sustainability, rather than wasteful, luxury production.

QUESTION: *This is your first trip to South Africa, what are your initial impressions? How does the South African democratic struggle relate to those elsewhere in the Third World?*

There are so many people here who are politicised, who are committed to fighting for a new South Africa. Overcoming apartheid is the most important thing. But what is also important is the diversity of groups trying to promote the interests of people at the bottom rungs of society. This trip has given me a lot of hope that there will be a new society here based on people's movements.

Many of us in colonised countries find that, although we have now gained political independence, from an economic, cultural and social point of view, we are far from having achieved

independence. We are still as colonised as before. This is partly because our development models are still very dependent upon the international system.

There are some major problems with this. Our countries continue to be trapped in the international system in which we produce raw materials and export them to the world market. The prices of commodities have really collapsed in the last ten years, as more and more countries have been asked by the World Bank and IMF to produce more in order to export more. Since all countries are asked simultaneously to export commodities, there has been a surplus in the world market. Prices have fallen and, while you produce more, you earn less. This has led to Third World rural poverty, a shortage of foreign exchange and a debt crisis.

... the problem [in the third world] comes from their (the World Bank's) own policies and financial advice...

Instead of declaring a default, which would be a drastic step, Third World countries seek the help of the World Bank and IMF. These then say: "Okay, you have been naughty, you have not managed your economy well. If you want to continue trading, we will lend you more money, but on condition that you follow a certain set of macroeconomic policies that we will give to you. The main principles are that you must privatise, you must deregulate, you must basically give up the public sector, you must liberalise trade and reduce your tariffs, you must open up to imports, you must orientate to exports."

What the World Bank forgets to say is that the problem comes in the first place from their own policies and financial advice. It is these policies and this advice that led to the debt crisis. It is the World Bank that is the naughty boy!

This is not to deny that Third World governments must also carry a share of the blame – for overborrowing and for investing borrowed money in unfeasible luxury projects. In the case of many of these countries there has also been mismanagement, corruption and patronage.

But in other Third World countries there was a genuine attempt to put borrowed money into social

development projects, such as social welfare and poverty eradication. This kind of investment obviously needs to be subsidised, it isn't going to reap an immediate economic return.

But there is little sympathy for this fact. Instead, Third World countries are forced to have a pro-market, pro-corporations and pro-export policy. This orientation has not solved their debt problem – in many cases it has made it worse – and it has not solved their poverty problem. The failure of the World Bank and IMF package has led to eruptions of social unrest in many countries, as food prices have shot up, as small farmers have lost their subsidies, as governments have cut their budgets – not so much on military spending, but on education, health care, housing and social welfare.

As a result of this sad state, trade unions, peasant organisations, residents' associations, political parties throughout the Third World are in a perpetual state of protest against these macroeconomic policies.

These protests are, typically, not based on any hard-core ideology. They are based on the fact that people's rights are being trampled upon, they are losing their jobs, their children cannot go to school, there is malnutrition. There is no alternative but to organise and fight against this type of development policy. The fight is against the elites in one's own country, as well as against the international structures and systems. Progressively, social movements in the Third World, which used to focus more on the community level, have found that they are not going to succeed unless they address national macroeconomic policies. The social movements have to fight against the international system itself.

The fact that you can borrow more money from overseas does not mean that you will escape from the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots. That is a lesson South Africans need to learn from many Third World countries.

QUESTION: *You have talked elsewhere about the need for selective debt repudiation, especially when foreign debts are, as you have put it, morally "odious". Some ANC economists have argued that South Africa's $20 billion foreign debt should not be repaid to foreign banks directly, but should be converted into a fund for local development. What do you think?*

I think that's a very good proposal. South Africa is unique, everybody in the world knows about apartheid, and that apartheid is obnoxious. I think the new government should be able to present a very strong case to the

international financial institutions to have debt relief. Go for debt relief, because many of the governments in the North have agreed to debt relief for other sub-Saharan countries. Even middle-ranking countries have succeeded in getting debt relief.

The majority of people in South Africa had no say whatsoever when South Africa's debts were contracted. And the majority of South Africans have derived no benefit whatsoever from these debts. With a new democratic government sometime next year in need of funds, why should it have to repay those debts? Of course, the creditors will say that the rich South Africans who contracted the debts in the first place have the capacity to repay. But you should certainly consider insisting that debts contracted by the apartheid government should be subject to debt relief, or debt-for-social-equity swaps. A complicating factor may well be that the present regime will also be partly in the next government. You will need some sophisticated arguments – but I'm sure they can be made.

QUESTION: *At present, wealthy South Africans are pumping vast sums of capital out of the country. Local banks are opening offices in Switzerland, Panama, the Cayman Islands and the like. This kind of capital flight is a well-known problem in the Third World. How are the various social movements responding?*

In the case of the Philippines, a lot of money flowed out during the Marcos years, into Swiss bank accounts. The new government set up an inquiry into capital flight, and tried to recover part of the capital by negotiating with the Swiss authorities and taking the Marcos family to court. At the same time, there is a Swiss group campaigning for more transparency in Swiss bank accounts, and there is a movement among our Northern NGO friends to reduce capital flight. You may not be able to stop it completely, but you should at least be able to identify who has money where.

QUESTION: *Is there any consensus emerging in the Third World Network on how to deal with foreign loans in general?*

Loans are needed, but we are not sure that they are needed from the World Bank, which has played a nasty role as world economic policeman. It has poured its horrible medicine down our throats, a medicine that has not cured but made us more sick. There is a consensus among most NGOs in the Third World, and among our northern friends, that at the very minimum the structural adjustment prescription

must be changed. National governments together with the social movements (the trade unions, the farmers organisations, the civic organisations, etc.) have to draw up their own national plan of what kind of new society they want.

We must minimise the amount of finance we need from overseas. The emphasis needs to be on a process of equitable social reform, so that investments are directed towards creating jobs for the poor and also satisfying the basic needs of the poor - water, housing, health, education and so on. Third World governments need to reorient their own public expenditure. In South Africa you can develop a formidable policy of helping poor people get jobs, health-care and housing without being overly dependent on foreign donors. You can do it with you own domestic resources.

The biggest lesson that other Third World countries have learned is never to fall into excessive external debt. That way you lose your sovereignty, your country will belong to Washington, London, Bonn or Tokyo. All the great social struggles you have waged in the past will come to very little indeed. At the end of the day you remain colonised. ☭

Nepali Communist Party General Secretary killed

by Essop Pahad

AT the beginning of May, I had the honour of meeting Madan Bhandari, general secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal, UML (Unified Marxist-Leninist). We were both in Calcutta at the invitation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Comrade Bhandari, 41 years old, was an eager listener, posing many challenging questions about the South African struggle and the SACP in particular. He asked me to convey to South Africans the sense of outrage felt by all Nepali progressives at the assassination of Chris Hani.

Tragically, just two weeks later, Bhandari himself was to be killed in mysterious circumstances.

The jeep, in which he and a fellow Nepali communist leader were travelling, plunged 150 feet into a river. The driver claimed the brakes had failed and that he had sustained rib injuries. Investigations, however, showed that the brakes of the jeep were in good condition and that the driver had, inexplicably, not sustained any injuries.

General Secretary of the Nepali Communist Party (UML) Cde Madan Bhandari died mysteriously in a motor-car accident

Despite this, a one-person government inquiry found that there "was no foul play". The people of Nepal think differently, they are convinced that Bhandari was mur-dered. In response to a call from the UML, a nationwide strike was launched on June 25. There were five days of unrest, in which government forces killed at least 11 people.

On July 4 a second strike was launched. The capital of Nepal, Kathmandu, was shut down. There

were clashes with police in Jitpur and elsewhere. The police have been using teargas and rubber bullets. A curfew has also been invoked. The popular forces are demanding the reopening of the investigation into Bhandari's death and the resignation of the Nepali prime minister.

Nepal

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. It was ruled, until recently, by a monarchy with absolute powers. Its principal export seems to have been the supply of Gurkha troops to the British Army. Throughout the long period of authoritarian monarchical rule, the monarchs showed absolutely no concern for even the most elementary needs of the people.

The Communist Party of Nepal was formed in 1949. From its inception the CPN worked in extremely difficult conditions. The party also faced many internal problems, and was plagued by divisions and a serious split. As with many other communist parties, the split was precipitated by the Sino-Soviet conflict. Indeed, Comrade Bhandari was influenced by the policies and positions of the Communist Party of China, and he was one of the leaders of the split from the CPN in 1971.

In the 1980s a sharp debate developed in Nepali left circles around unity with other anti-monarchy and pro-democracy forces. Some communists were opposed to any co-operation with the Nepal's Congress Party. Broad unity was, however, achieved by 1989. With broad unity in place, the opposition forces were able to strip the king of any effective political power.

The present CPN (UML)) was launched, following the merger of the two main communist parties – the CPN (Marxist) and the CPN (Marxist-Leninist). This merger enabled communists in Nepal to fight the general election of 1991 as an effective force.

The Nepali Congress Party won the elections, but the communists gained 69 out of 210 seats, making them the leading opposition party. Madan Bhandari, who had spent fifteen years in the underground, emerged as a major political figure and an immensely popular person.

All of this was underlined at his funeral. He was buried with full military honours. Hundreds of thousands of people lined the streets of Kathmandu, occupied roof-tops and leaned out of windows as his cortege moved through the capital city.

In Nepal, as in South Africa, the forces who were so confidently proclaiming the "natural death of communism" three years ago, are being rebuffed daily by massive popular support for communism. Murdering communist leaders will never kill the cause. ☭

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